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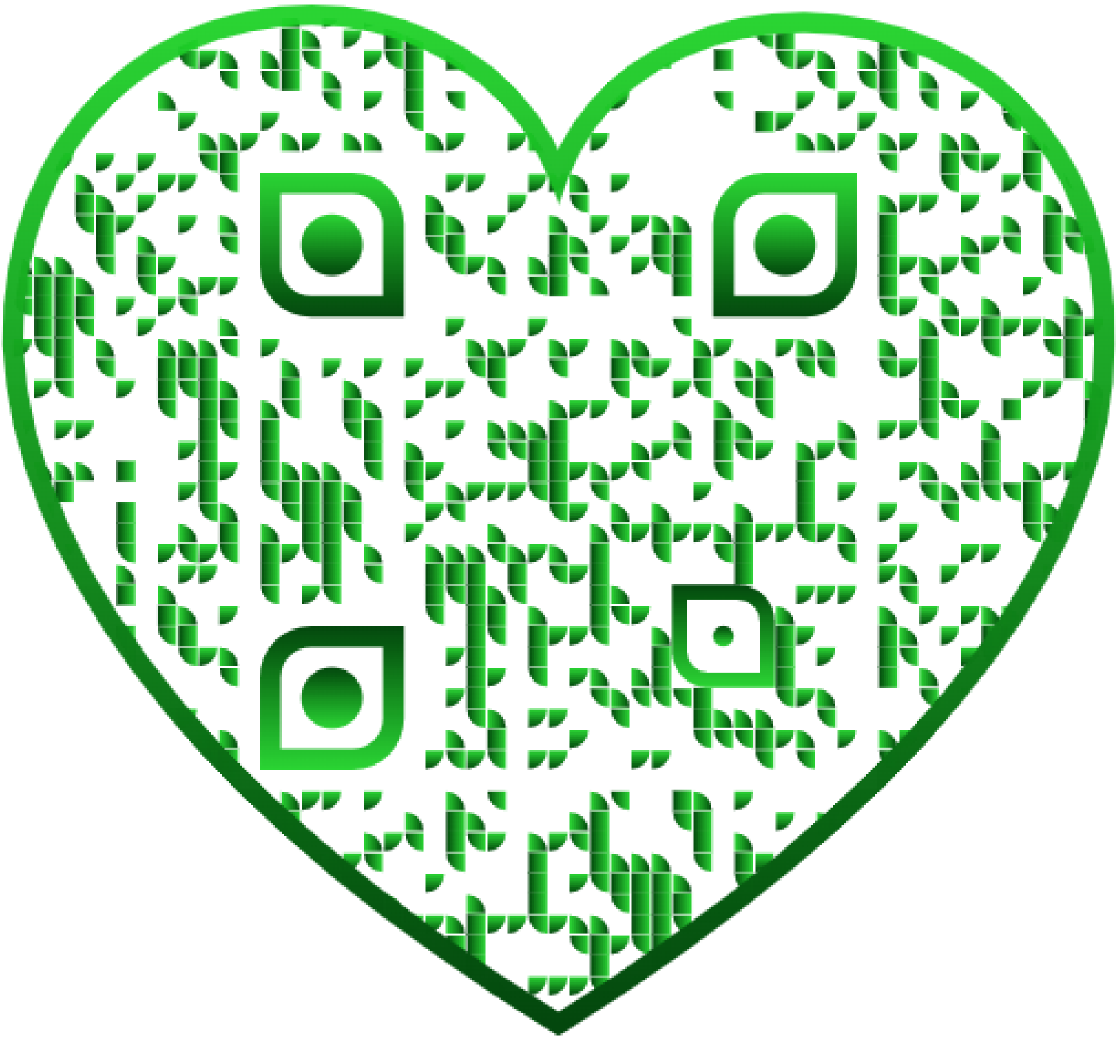

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There's no other band like Iron Maiden. It's not just the music (as fantastic as it is) or the album covers or the stage shows (though you'd be hard pressed to find anyone else with a mascot as enduring as Eddie) or even the incredible universe they've willed into being over the last 40 years. Though, of course, all of those stand as a measure of their achievements.

No, what truly sets Iron Maiden apart has been their amazing ability to connect with successive generations in a way that other bands don't. Whether you came on board in the late 70s with *The Soundhouse Tapes*, in the midst of their imperial height in the 80s or during their incredible post-millennial resurgence, the Maiden you first banged your head to are the one that has stuck with you. You don't get into Maiden for nostalgia – you get into Maiden because the albums they make now as are vital as the albums they made back then.

For me, it was the *Maiden Japan* EP back in the early 80s that hooked me in as a schoolkid. The cover was the first thing I noticed – of course it was! It was Eddie with a Samurai Sword! – but that would have been nothing without the music to back it up. That same story has been repeated down the years – for some it's *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* or *Dance Of Death*, for others it's *Fear Of The Dark* or *The Book Of Souls*. Whichever version of Maiden you hear first, that's your Maiden.

We're celebrating that timeless legacy in this special one-off magazine, which collects the best interviews and features from the pages of *Classic Rock* and *Metal Hammer* magazines. We follow the band from their earliest days on the London pub circuit to the triumphs of the 80s right up to the present day, where they stand as the most iconic and enduring metal band on the planet.

So whichever Iron Maiden is your Iron Maiden, there's something here for you. As somebody once said: Oh well, wherever you are, Iron Maiden's going to get you, no matter how far…

Dave Everley,
Editor

Contents

Features

The 70s & 80s

8 The Early Years
From Gypsy's Kiss to Smiler, we chart the rise of Steve Harris from trainee draughtsman to metal superstar-in-waiting.

10 The Birth Of NWOBHM
A front row view of the 1979 gig that spawned a whole new movement. Plus: we track down Maiden's forgotten early members.

14 Iron Maiden/Killers
How five leather-jacketed bruisers from the East End made the albums that launched the legend.

20 The Number Of The Beast
Exit Paul Di'Anno, enter Bruce Dickinson... and the album that would propel Maiden to worldwide success.

26 Maiden America
From Leytonstone to Las Vegas: how Maiden took on the USA in the 1980s - and won!

36 Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son
Gigantic icebergs and 10-minute epics - the story of the album that took Maiden to the next level.

44 The Steve Harris Interview
"Prog rock taught me to do whatever the hell you want" - Maiden's founder and bassist reveals the music that shaped him.

The 90s

52 The Early 90s
Maiden greeted the new decade with fire in their loins - but they were about to face a crisis that threw their future into doubt.

56 Blaze Bayley
He was the man who had to follow Bruce Dickinson - now Blaze looks back at his time with the world's biggest metal band.

The 00s

62 Brave New World
Reunited and reborn - how Maiden entered the new millennium stronger than they'd ever been before.

66 A Matter Of Life And Death
Ready, aim, fire - how Maiden went from strength to prog-metal strength with their 2006 classic.

74 Somewhere Back In Time
Buckle up, it's going to be a bumpy ride - we join Maiden aboard Flight 666 as they bring their amazing 2008 tour to South America.

The 10s

84 The Final Frontier
Was their 15th album the end of the road for Iron Maiden? We set our lasers to stun in an attempt to find out...

92 Clive Burr
He powered Maiden's first three albums but his life took a tragic turn. We sat down with the drummer three years before he died.

96 The Story Of Maiden's Success
From the Ruskin Arms to superstardom - we talk to the three "control freaks" who steered Iron Maiden to world domination.

104 The Book Of Souls
It was Maiden's crowning glory - until a cancer diagnosis threw everything into doubt. All six members open up in their frankest interview ever.

118 The Bruce Dickinson Interview
The Air-Raid Siren talks. We listen.

124 The Legacy Of The Beast
Behind the scenes on the biggest tour of Maiden's career.

132 The Book Of Eddie
How a smash-hit mobile phone game became a multi-part comic book series that took Eddie to the far reaches of the universe.

136 The 50 Greatest Iron Maiden Songs Ever!
The ultimate run down of the most iconic anthems by the greatest metal band of them all.

MAIN: GETTY ARTWORK: MAIDEN

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FUTURE

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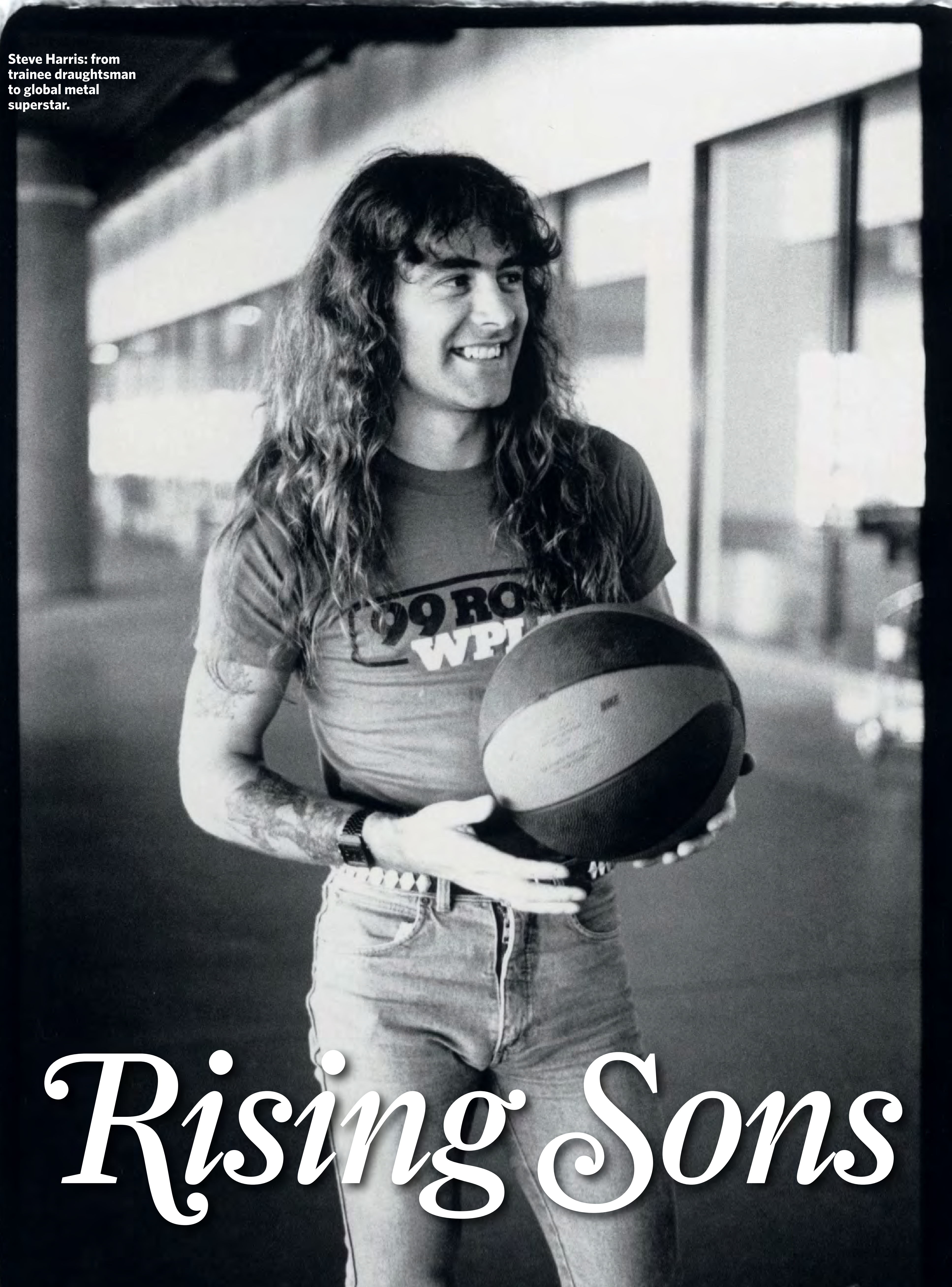
The 70s & 80s

From the birth of the beast in the pubs of the East End to the arenas of Europe and America, we chart Iron Maiden's unstoppable rise and the stories behind the albums that would define metal, from *Number Of The Beast* to *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*. Strap in, it's going to be a hell of a ride...



Steve Harris: from trainee draughtsman to global metal superstar.

Rising Sons

Gypsy's Kiss? Smiler? They might be not household names, but without them giving **Steve Harris** his first taste of band life, there'd be no Iron Maiden.

Words: **Johnny Black** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

In November 1973, Steve Harris was a 17-year-old trainee draughtsman whose dreams of becoming a professional footballer had been elbowed aside by a burgeoning interest in rock music. With the sort of single-mindedness that would define him, he bought a bass, jacked in his job and joined his first band – the first step in a career that's still going strong more than 40 years later.

Bob Verschoyle (vocalist, Gypsy's Kiss): I met Steve when I was twelve and he was ten. He lived on Beaumont Road Estate in Leyton and I lived nearby. Steve loved football, so I used to go over after school and at weekends for a kick about. Every Sunday afternoon, someone would bring a radio and we'd listen to *Pick Of The Pops* with Alan 'Fluff' Freeman, to hear who was the new number one. As we got older we got less into pop and more into rock. Steve was a big Genesis fan, and I was into Emerson, Lake And Palmer. I used to get a slating from Steve because he was strictly a guitar man; didn't like the organ.

Steve Harris: We used to muck about in my house. I used to have a couple of guys comin' over from school, just sort of messin' about.

Bob Verschoyle: After Steve's mum and dad split up, he moved in with his nan, Ada, in Steele Road. Steve knew a guy from school, Dave Smith, who could play guitar, so he came round, and Steve got a bass. The difference between the rest of us and Steve was dedication. He'd be playing bass all the time. He became a trainee draughtsman, but he gave that up to concentrate on playing. His whole life was like that. Anything he did, he went at it one hundred per cent. He was the Subbuteo king, because he hated losing, so he just played and played. And the same with football or the bass. Dave knew another guitarist, Roy Middleton, who knew a drummer, Paul Sears.

> *"I used to wind Steve up. My vocals were slightly out of time."*
> BOB VERSCHOYLE

Paul Sears: We met Steve and Dave at The Cart and Horses, one Friday night in April 1974, and then Steve invited us round to his nan's for a jam the next day. I set my kit up and we had a bit of a blast. Ada had a run-in with one of the neighbours one time, and the air went blue. I had no idea sweet old ladies knew words like that. She just told him where to go. "You f-off," she said. "These f-in' boys are gonna be famous." She was amazing, such a cool old lady, and a huge influence on Steve.

Bob Verschoyle: I couldn't really play anything, so I used to help set the gear up. Steve wasn't writing songs yet, so they started with covers, *Blowing Free* by Wishbone Ash, *Paranoid*, *Smoke On The Water*, *All Right Now*… and *Southern Man* by Neil Young. One day Dave couldn't sing, so they tried doing everything as instrumentals. But it wasn't working, so I offered to help because I knew all the words. Steve said: "Bloody 'ell, you can sing!", so I became the vocalist. Steve had to be the boss. I used to wind him up because my vocals would be slightly out of time, so he'd stop and have a go at me. Then, once I got it right, he was fine.

Bob Verschoyle: Dave had started writing songs, one of which was called *Influence*, but it was pretty basic, more like punk than rock to me. He wrote another one called *Heat Crazed Vole* – such a horrendous title it used to make us laugh.

> *"Steve invited us around to his nan's for a jam."*
> PAUL SEARS

Paul Sears: To get the sound Steve wanted, we needed a second guitarist. So I suggested a guy I'd played with called Tim Nash (aka Tim Wotsit). Excellent guitarist, very affable, no ego, so he came in and it worked. The sound, particularly during the solos where Tim would do hard-hitting strummed chords, flowed better. So that was the original five-piece Influence. The only gig we did under that name was the talent competition in St Nick's Hall in Aberfeldy Street, Poplar in July of 1974.

Dave Beazley (aka Dave Lights, future Iron Maiden lighting engineer): I promoted Steve Harris's first gig. There was a Battle Of The Bands competition in our local church hall and that was the first time I met Steve.

Paul Sears: It was Steve's first-ever public performance. He'd never been on stage in his life, and he was so nervous. The place was packed, and it was being judged by The Who's management – Kit Lambert and Chris Stamp – who were friends of the vicar. We opened with *Influence*, which was fine, but our second song, *What Went Wrong*, was supposed to start with Steve's bass intro but it got fuddled. I was supposed to take my cue from Steve and bring the rest of the band in, but that cue never came. But we recovered and finished off with *Heat Crazed Vole*.

Dave Beazley: It was a good band. I wouldn't say that it was as good as Iron Maiden, cos it was different. Steve was learning to play bass, trying to find his style.

Paul Sears: Lambert and Stamp were very nice to us. They said that with three original tracks in that style, there was a good chance we could succeed, but we didn't win.

Bob Verschoyle: The band that won was called Flame, but they were all dressed in like a uniform, just a pop band really.

Paul Sears: Soon after, we decided on a name change because single word names – Pentangle, Cream – were a bit late sixties, and two words – Uriah Heep, Deep Purple – now felt more contemporary. So I was sitting in the pub one night when this old boy stood up to go to the toilet and said: "I'm gonna have a gypsy's kiss, then I'm off home." I'd never heard that before, so I suggested it and the band all loved it.

Bob Verschoyle: We built the set up gradually to about ten songs, mostly covers, a Chuck Berry, a Beatles number – *I Am The Walrus* – and those two of Dave's, but Steve was still very nervous. Before gigs he'd be in the toilet and you'd have to drag him out. "Come on, Steve. We're on in a minute."

Paul Sears: We lasted about ten gigs, in all.

Bob Verschoyle: Steve was always phoning me up for rehearsals when I'd planned something else, so in the end, I just wasn't prepared to drop everything whenever Steve wanted. He wasn't working, so it didn't matter to him. So at one rehearsal I just told him I was leaving.

Paul Sears: We didn't survive long after Bob left. We knew it was going downhill, and Tim and Steve didn't get along on a personal level. By the end it was just me and Steve until one day he answered an ad in *Melody Maker*, placed by two brothers, Mick and Tony Clee, looking to form a band, called Smiler.

Steve Harris: I was seventeen or eighteen. All the others were twenty-six or twenty-seven. I thought it was great because they had much more experience than me. So, of course, I thought I was going to learn lots of stuff, which I did. We used to play mostly blues and rhythm'n'blues. We used to cover Savoy Brown, Fleetwood Mac, Peter Green.

Paul Sears: I didn't stay with them beyond the rehearsal stage. I'd been on the road for five years and I was beginning to think it wasn't going to happen for me. It was time to get myself a proper job. I left. They brought in Doug Sampson to replace me, and Dennis Wilcock on vocals.

Steve Harris: When I started writing my own stuff, it was with a lot of combinations and time changes and power. I wanted to do my first real song with Smiler, but when I brought it to them, they said: "Oh shit, this has too many time changes. We're not bloody doing this!" I couldn't handle that attitude, so I left and formed Iron Maiden.

THE BIRTH OF NWOBHM

On May 8, 1979 a four-piece **Iron Maiden** played a North London sweatbox with Samson and Angel Witch – a gig that would be ground zero for rock's next big movement.

WORDS: JOHNNY BLACK – PHOTOS: PAUL SLATTERY

Between 1975 and 1978, the nascent Iron Maiden earned their spurs on London's pub circuit. But with punk raging, getting noticed by record labels was easier said than done – at least it was until a DJ named Neal Kay opened a new club in the wilds of North London.

Neal Kay (DJ/founder, Heavy Metal Soundhouse): Punk was the prevalent music in 1978, but since 1975 I'd been building up a small venue in Kingsbury as a heavy metal discotheque. It was known as The Bandwagon in the Prince Of Wales pub, but I re-christened it The Heavy Metal Soundhouse. The main room held about 700 people, and we had a fuckin' ginormous sound system. I kept badgering Geoff Barton at *Sounds* to come down, because I knew it was unique, and a great story. In the end he came.

Geoff Barton (writing in *Sounds*, August 1978): The decor resembles Dodge City, American B-movie Western style but, with alternating flashing lights/darkness, your eyes never really adjust to notice that much detail. The Bandwagon and the music that's played there is very much a present day reality, no matter what the fashion pundits might tell you. And to me, and a goodly number of other punters, it's like a little bit of heaven on Earth.

Alan Lewis (editor, *Sounds*): I coined NWOBHM (New Wave Of British Heavy Metal) as a front-page headline. But it was sort of an in-joke. We were always hailing something or other as 'The New Wave Of…'

Iron Maiden in 1979:(l-r) Dave Murray,Paul Di'Anno, Steve Harris, Doug Sampson.

'I got goosebumps watching them. It was Deep Purple for the 80s."

SAMSON SINGER BRUCE DICKINSON

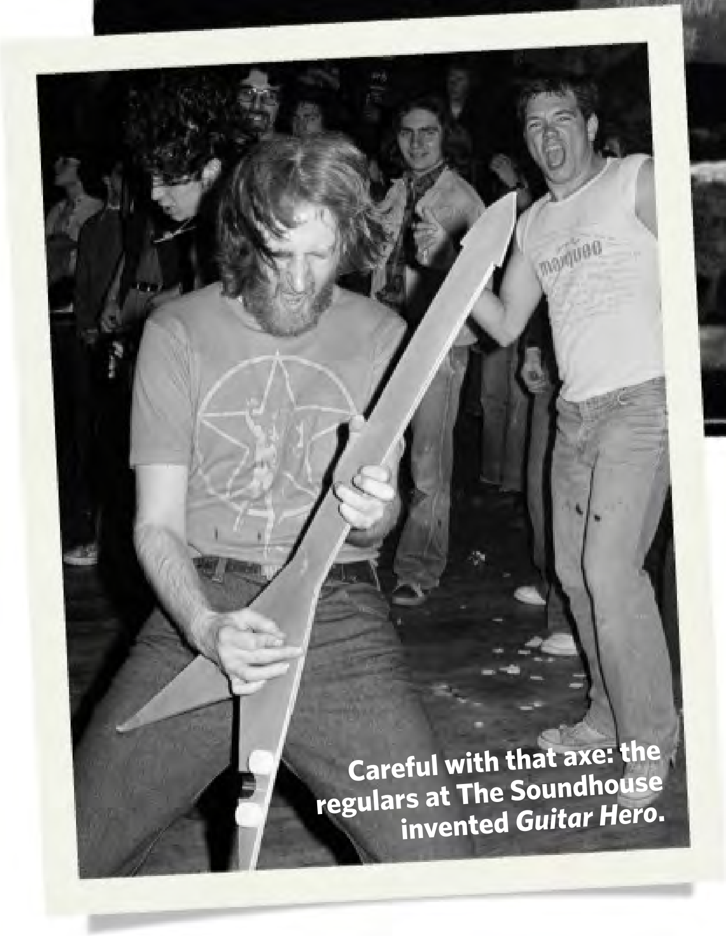
Neal Kay: After Barton's feature, bands from all over the world started sending us their tapes to play. People started travelling to The Soundhouse from all over the country, and record companies started bringing their artists along to meet the kids. We were getting daily newspapers coming down, film crews – we loaned our biker contingent to The Who for *Quadrophenia*. Early in January of 1979, a young guy came up to the stage and pressed this demo cassette of his band, Iron Maiden, into my hands. He said: "Do me a favour mate. Take this 'ome and give it a listen, willya?" I said: "Yeah, you and about five million others." But I took it home, put it on and it was electrifying. Light years ahead of anything I'd heard. It had been recorded a few days earlier at Spaceward Studios in Cambridge. The next night, I played it at The Soundhouse, and everyone went mad.

Steve Harris: That was the thing that started people getting interested in the band. I mean, we did the demo tape basically to get work. We didn't dream of it being placed anywhere or anything like that.

Neal Kay: Geoff Barton had started a Heavy Metal Soundhouse chart in *Sounds* which I compiled every week based on the requests I was getting, and *Prowler* from the demo went to number one. I became determined to help make Maiden happen. So I launched myself on a sales tour around the industry with that demo tape. I got laughed out of everyone's door. Mick Parker, manager of The Music Machine in Camden, phoned me. He'd been following the Soundhouse story in the papers, and asked would I like to put shows on with bands of my choice once a week? That was a huge opportunity because the hardest thing was to get the music business to come out of London.

Ashley Goodall (A&R man, EMI Records): I was new at EMI, and I grew up loving hard progressive rock, so my instinct was to look for bands from that area. It quickly became obvious to

Gonna get ya: Maiden break out on stage at Camden's Music Machine.



Careful with that axe: the regulars at The Soundhouse invented *Guitar Hero*.

IRON MAIDEN

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me that it wasn't punk bands that were pulling crowds, but heavy rock groups. And hardly any A&R guys were interested in it. The first time I saw Maiden was at The Swan in Hammersmith [March 10, 1979]. I went in and it was like a football crowd. I thought: "Woah, hang on, this is real. These are happening." After that I started going to see them more often to keep track of them. Maiden seemed more together than the other metal bands I was seeing. They were better organised, had a more vociferous following, the tapes, the T-shirts, the identity – all the bits seemed to be in place.

Neal Kay: Probably the most significant gig I did at The Music Machine was when I put Samson, Iron Maiden and Angel Witch on [May 8, 1979], as the first gig of a tour, called The Heavy Metal Crusade.

Steve 'Loopy' Newhouse (roadie, Iron Maiden): Angel Witch opened the gig and played what I remember as a powerful, Sabbathesque set.

Geoff Barton: I was reminded of the first Black Sabbath album being played through a cement mixer. The band, dressed in cheesecloth shirts and loon pants, tossed their long hair, pouted, posed and punched their fists into the air after each agonising guitar solo.

Steve 'Loopy' Newhouse: They played for about half an hour, maybe more… then it was our turn.

Geoff Barton: Maiden, resplendent in tight-fitting leather outfits, looked poised and coolly confident, and opening number *Wrathchild* was a suitably demented rock anthem.

Bruce Dickinson (vocalist, Samson): It was obvious to me that they were streets ahead of everybody else on the bill. I got goosebumps watching them, it gave me the same feeling I got as a kid listening to *Deep Purple In Rock* for the first time. I remember thinking: "Wow, this is like Purple for the 80s."

Geoff Barton: During Samson's performance you got dry ice, flashbombs, dry ice, showers of confetti, dry ice, fireworks, dry ice, clouds of multi-coloured smoke and even some dry ice into the bargain.

Steve 'Loopy' Newhouse: Bruce Dickinson, a young man with big ideas, was the highlight of Samson's set. We watched him climb all over the PA, jump off and do barrel rolls. He was the most electric frontman we'd ever seen. The rest of the band noticed too. I stood next to Steve Harris, who had Dave Murray to his right, and the two of them chatted away through the Samson set. In hindsight, I guess we can all assume what about.

Ashley Goodall: By June I had decided I wanted to sign Maiden, but it wasn't an easy sell because EMI didn't have much metal on their books.

Rod Smallwood: When I first saw Maiden [mid-July 1979], they played without Paul Di'Anno who'd been arrested for carrying a work knife in his pocket. There was just Steve, Dave Murray and the old drummer Doug Sampson, and I just remember thinking I'd never seen anybody look the audience in the eye with the same intent as they had on stage, and how much they were obviously into it, and was probably the most real band I'd ever seen.

Ashley Goodall: The idea emerged of doing a compilation album [*Metal For Muthas*] of this new wave. I thought it would be a really good way to sum up what was going on. I brought in the bands to do some tracks [October 1979] in our demo studio at EMI. Incorporating Maiden into the *Metal For Muthas* album, I think, gave me a relationship with them that other record companies didn't have. Of course, as soon as one company gets interested, all the others start piling in. That became very obvious at The Marquee showcase gig [Oct 19, 1979] where Chrysalis and others turned up. Rod Smallwood was using our interest to get other companies to look at them.

Running free: third vocalist Paul Di'Anno hit the right note.

Rod Smallwood: There was a massive queue outside and it was very vibrant, very happening. It was the first time we'd brought down A&R people, and it was so packed they could hardly see.

Ashley Goodall: But we were pretty close to Maiden by this stage, and after the Marquee show the real negotiations started.

Rod Smallwood: We didn't sign the management contract until after I'd done the recording deal with EMI [Dec 15, 1979] and the publishing deal with Zomba, because I wanted to make sure that these were people I could work with long-term.

Ashley Goodall: Rod insisted on a three album commitment from EMI because he wanted the band to be a longer term project. We went into the studio to do their first single, *Running Free*, just before Christmas 1979. We also did the album pretty fast, less than a month, with Will Malone producing, in Kingsway Studios. Later in the month we released *Metal For Muthas* which turned into a big deal for EMI. It shipped out 20,000, a huge amount for a compilation of unknown artists. It went to No.12 in the chart which completely took EMI by surprise. Next thing we knew, Maiden were on *Top Of The Pops* [Feb 22, 1980]. That was the start of people beginning to know who Iron Maiden were.

Rod Smallwood: The first album came out in February 1980 and debuted on the UK chart at number four. It ended up doing about 350,000 worldwide, which isn't bad for a group that was turned down by CBS because the songs weren't strong enough.

Steve Harris: The plan at the start was just to get a deal and tour, there were no thoughts of world domination… to go straight into the charts at number four was way beyond our expectations, it was outrageous really.

GETTY

THE EX-FACTOR

Between 1975 and 1980, Maiden got through five guitarists, three drummers, two vocalists and a keyboard player. We track down some of those missing in action…

WORDS: MALCOLM DOME

Paul Mario Day

VOCALS, 1975-76

"I worked close to where Steve Harris lived. One day I saw him the street, and asked whether he was looking for a singer. This was at the end of Gypsy's Kiss, and they had a singer at the time. But shortly after he said he'd give me a try. My first gig was at a church hall in front of about 10 or 20 people. But we quickly got a residency at the Cart And Horses every Thursday. We mostly did original material, songs that would end up on the first two Maiden albums. But we'd also do the occasional cover. The band's sound was already in place. I wasn't an experienced frontman, and that eventually counted against me. They wanted me to be more showbiz, and I didn't know how. I also wanted to spend more time with my girlfriend, and couldn't get time off work for gigs. So they finally got rid of me. I emigrated to Australia in 1986. I keep my hand in, by singing with a covers band at weekends."

Tony Moore

KEYBOARDS/SYNTHESISER, 1977

"I answered an ad in *Melody Maker*. Maiden were looking for a keyboard player who could also play synth. I was living in Bristol, but drove to East London for my audition at Scarf Studios in Mile End. It was very relaxed, and they offered me the job. For a while I lived with Steve at his grandmother's place. He and I spent ages talking about music, and his passion for the band impressed me. He was convinced they would be one of the biggest bands in the world. We rehearsed for months. They already had the songs on the debut album pretty much written, plus a couple from the second one. I only did one gig with them, at The Bridgehouse in Canning Town. It was obvious then that what I did wasn't right for them. They needed two guitarists, and there was no room for a synth. I left soon afterwards. These days, I look after aspiring artists at The Bedford in South London. One band I'm working with has Jake Smallwood as their singer – his dad is Rod."

Bob Sawyer

GUITAR, DECEMBER 1976 – SPRING 1977

"I was never auditioned by the band, I was straight in. Our first gig was for a function in a pub. Everyone was in tuxedos and ballgowns. Talk about being out of place. But they loved us. We then got a residency at the Cart And Horses in East London. Our set consisted mainly of songs that would eventually appear on the first Maiden album, plus a cover of Montrose's *I Got The Fire* and an original called *High Road In Time*, which sounded like Trapeze. I did fifty gigs with Maiden, mostly in East London, which was our stronghold. Singer Dennis Wilcock was controlling the band at the time, and his ego was huge. He didn't like me, and one day showed up at my house with one of our roadies, dropped off my gear and said I was out. He did the same with Dave! I'm now in a blues/jazz band called Firebird. I've also written a book about my time in the music business."

Paul Cairns

GUITAR, 1978-79

"Maiden wanted a second guitarist to work with Dave Murray. I answered an ad in *Melody Maker*. On the day I turned up, there were eight guitarists before me, and this was the third or fourth day of auditions. Dave and I were equals, and rehearsed together a lot at Steve's grandmother's house. We both liked the Thin Lizzy harmony guitar style, and that's what we wanted to get into Maiden. I did less than 10 shows with them, and almost all of these were in East London. We regarded anything even in West London as a foreign gig! I played on all the tracks featured on *The Soundhouse Tapes*, but never got credited for this. I was fired in spring '79 because they claimed I wasn't cutting it on stage. But then I had only just come out of hospital. After a gig at the Cart And Horses, I was told they were replacing me. I reckon the band were looking for an excuse to get rid of me. Right now I'm in a country rock duo with a female singer."

"I got on better with Judas Priest when we supported them."

DENNIS STRATTON

Dennis Stratton

GUITAR, 1979-80

"I was in a band called Remus Down Boulevard. Both Steve Harris and Dave Murray used to come and see us play at The Bridgehouse. When Maiden were looking for a second guitarist I sent them my details but never heard back. By chance, I bumped into Steve's girlfriend on the bus and she told me they were anxious to get hold of me. I gave her my address, and the next day Rod Smallwood sent me a telegram asking me to call him. They gave me a cassette of a few songs with one guitar. I added some harmony ideas, and they offered me the gig. Maiden's fan base around the UK was massive, and there was a real rush to get the debut album out. Rod wanted to keep the five of us together as a gang, but I was married with a child and wanted to spend time with my family. This, combined with the fact that I seemed to get on better than anyone else with some members of Judas Priest and Kiss when we supported them, eventually led to them firing me in October 1980. These days, I play with Maiden tribute bands all over the world."

RUNNING FREE

As the 1980s dawned, **Iron Maiden** were about to record their debut album. It was the start of a journey that would launch them into the stratosphere. But there were some massive hurdles to overcome first.

Words: **Paul Elliott**

In the first days of 1980, when Iron Maiden entered Kingsway Studios in West London to begin recording their debut album, bassist Steve Harris had mixed emotions. He had a quiet confidence in the strength of the material he had written for the band and he also knew that the band's new line-up was the best it had ever been, with the addition of a hard-hitting drummer in Clive Burr, and an accomplished guitarist in Dennis Stratton to play alongside Dave Murray.

Even so, Harris had, deep down, a sense of nagging fear. "I suppose I was always worried in the back of my mind that it could all come tumbling down rather quickly," he later admitted. "You don't take anything for granted – it's the old 'here today, gone tomorrow' thing. And it's very much a business that's like that – more so than most other professions. So you try not to get yourself too worked up, in case it falls flat. That was my attitude."

For all his pragmatism, Harris was a born leader with a fierce determination to succeed and a single-minded vision for Maiden. As Dave Murray said: "Steve was the nucleus. He gave the band its identity. He was very meticulous and methodical. That's just how he was, right from the start. And it was fantastic to have that focus with Steve's songs and ideas and the way he projected them." It was that focus, and above all, those songs, that would define Iron Maiden's first album as a classic.

The plan was straightforward enough. "We'd been playing these songs live for a long time," Harris said. "We knew them inside out. And we wanted to capture in the studio what we did live. I think most first albums are like that. Any band that's been around a few years, the first album is like a best of those years."

The difficulty was in finding the right producer. One who had worked with the band in late '79 was Andy Scott, guitarist with glam rockers Sweet, who was relieved of his duties after suggesting that Harris play with a pick instead of his fingers. "I told him what he could do with that," Harris said.

His preferred option was Martin Birch, producer for Deep Purple – a major influence on Harris – and other rock giants including Rainbow and Whitesnake. But with Birch busy on Black Sabbath's *Heaven And Hell*, their first album with singer Ronnie James Dio, the Maiden job went to Wil Malone, who had also worked with Sabbath as conductor and arranger on the albums *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, *Sabotage* and *Never Say Die*!

To the band's irritation, Malone had a laidback approach that bordered on disinterest. "We had problems with the producer," Harris said. "We used to laugh about him sitting there with his feet up on the desk, smoking a big cigar and reading *Country Life* – because he didn't do fuck all else. We'd try to get some feedback off this guy, and he'd just go, 'Oh, I think you could do better.' So in the end we would just ignore him. We ended up bypassing him and worked directly with the engineer, Martin Levan. We were still learning then, so thank fuck we had a good engineer who was into it."

GETTY

Iron Maiden in 1980: (l-r) Dave Murray, Clive Burr, Paul Di'Anno, Dennis Stratton, Steve Harris.

"THE FIRST ALBUM DIDN'T SOUND AS FEROCIOUS AS WHEN WE PLAYED LIVE. IT DIDN'T HAVE THE ANGER."

STEVE HARRIS

Park life: Maiden off duty in East London.

There was also a moment, during the recording of the album's epic piece *Phantom Of The Opera*, when Harris sensed that Dennis Stratton, new to the band, might not be the right fit. On a day when the other members were absent from the studio, Stratton took it upon himself to add extra guitar harmonies and backing vocals to the track. Harris was horrified when he heard it. As he recalled: "They played it to me and I went, 'What the fuck's that?' It was like *Bohemian Rhapsody* gone wrong." Stratton later conceded: "It sounded too much like Queen. But that's me – I get carried away."

He was, he says, "a little upset" when his embellishments were wiped off the track. But he knew the score. This was Steve Harris's band, and that message was clear to all concerned, their label EMI included. Maiden's manager Rod Smallwood was a bullish operator who had secured a long-term deal with EMI as the first step towards world domination, but as he said, "The record company never had anything whatsoever to do with the creative vision of Iron Maiden. No one went into the studio, ever. They even kept me out!"

As principal songwriter, Harris was sole author of five of the tracks featured on the album. *Prowler* was a politically incorrect stalker song full of menace; *Transylvania* a head-banging instrumental with sizzling interplay from Murray and Stratton; *Strange World* a subtle, emotive number with sci-fi imagery; *Phantom Of The Opera* a seven-minute blitzkrieg and an air-guitarist's dream; *Iron Maiden*, the tumultuous signature song in which singer Paul Di'Anno delivered the self-fulfilling prophecy: *"Iron Maiden's gonna get you, no matter how far."*

"I WAS ALWAYS WORRIED IN THE BACK OF MY MIND THAT IT COULD ALL COME TUMBLING DOWN RATHER QUICKLY."

STEVE HARRIS

Two tracks were co-written by Harris and Di'Anno: *Running Free*, the album's anthem, inspired by the singer's juvenile delinquency as an East End skinhead; and *Remember Tomorrow*, a deep heavy metal ballad which had for Di'Anno "a special meaning", its title derived from a favourite phrase of his grandfather's. And there was one song written by Dave Murray, a sleazy tribute to a Cockney hooker, named *Charlotte The Harlot*. "A great song!" Murray said. "Great title too." Although he added, somewhat unconvincingly, "I can't remember where the lyrics came from."

As Harris later said, "We did hold some songs back, I must admit." Among them were two staples of the band's live set, *Sanctuary* and *Wrathchild*, both of which had been selected for a New Wave Of British Heavy Metal compilation album that EMI would release in February 1980, titled *Metal For Muthas*. There was also a feeling within the group that their album, despite Martin Levan's best efforts, sounded a little undercooked. "None of us were happy with the production," Harris said. "It just didn't sound as ferocious as we did when we played live. It didn't have enough of the fire and the bite and the anger that we had in our playing." But as he also recalled, "We knew we'd made a strong album. It had really good songs and loads of attitude. And as a singer, Paul had real charisma. It was still a good album. Really good."

It was more than that. Recorded for the meagre sum £12,000, Iron Maiden's debut turned out to be one of the greatest and most influential heavy metal albums of all time, a touchstone for Metallica and so many others that followed.

Iron Maiden were in Bristol, to play at a grubby little joint, fancifully named Romeo & Juliet's, on February 6, 1980 – the day when a damning review of the *Metal For Muthas* album appeared in a new issue of *Sounds*. It was just a few days after they finished recording at Kingsway that Maiden had begun the Metal For Muthas tour, headlining, with support from another young London-

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Onstage with Paul Di'Anno: "A larger than life character."

based band, Praying Mantis. *Sounds* writer Geoff Barton, who had done so much to promote the NWOBHM, pulled no punches in his assessment of the *Muthas* album, dismissing it as "a joke" and "a low-budget cash-in on the UK's much-vaunted metallic revival".

His complaints centred on weak recordings of tracks by promising bands such as Praying Mantis and Sledgehammer, and the inclusion of some lame acts, including the daftly named Toad The Wet Sprocket. But he praised the two Iron Maiden songs, *Wrathchild* and *Sanctuary*, as "raucous HM/punk crossovers and tantalizing tasters for their own forthcoming LP." And his conclusion – hailing Maiden as the NWOBHM's leading power – was on the money. "The more I think about it, the more I reckon that the 'guv'nors' crown now rests on their collective Cockney heads."

For Maiden, the timing of the NWOBHM had been fortuitous. As Harris said: "It was obvious that something big was happening, and that was great for us, being right in the thick of it." But he added, in typically straight-talking fashion: "I never really paid much attention to whatever else was going on. It's not that we didn't care about other bands or anything like that. Some bands we knew as friends and we hoped they all did well. But we never thought about what everyone was doing. We just got on with our own thing."

In the last week of February, *Running Free* was released as Iron Maiden's debut single. The cover art portrayed a sinister figure, lurking in a dark alley and brandishing a broken bottle as a longhaired rock fan ran for his life. The big reveal would come with the album cover. Ahead of that, *Running Free* blasted into the UK chart at No. 34 on the UK chart, leading to an appearance on *Top Of The Pops*. The band made a statement by refusing to mime to the track, as was standard for the show. Instead they performed live, the first group to do so on *TOTP* since The Who in 1972. "Everybody used to slag off *Top Of The Pops*," Harris said, "but for a metal band to get on there was a big thing at the time. It was fantastic that we were on there mixed in with all this pop stuff. And of course my mum hated it, which was great."

It was followed by a major UK tour, opening for Judas Priest in 3000-capacity theatres. In many respects it was a perfect match – Priest the established masters of British metal, Maiden the young pretenders with a similar style and twin-guitar attack. But in the build-up to the tour, Di'Anno had cockily proclaimed to *Sounds*' Garry Bushell that Maiden would "blow the bollocks off Priest". As a result, the tour played out in an atmosphere of simmering tension, with allegations of Priest's road crew sabotaging Maiden's sound. Di'Anno's boasting alienated some Priest fans. Many others were won over by Maiden's live prowess. And in a strange coincidence, a week after the tour ended, the Iron Maiden album, self-titled, and Priest's British Steel, were released on the same day, April 14.

In the two, there was much common ground: classically styled heavy metal power, dueling guitars, and bare-bones production. Di'Anno's singing was at times reminiscent of Priest's Rob Halford, and in *Remember Tomorrow* there were echoes of the Priest classic *Beyond The Realms Of Death*. And just as the cover of *British Steel* would become iconic – a razor blade stamped with the band's logo – so the artwork for Iron Maiden would burn an image into the consciousness of metal fans all over the world.

Illustrator Derek Riggs knew nothing of Iron Maiden when he painted a skeletal, wild-haired bogeyman on a lamp-lit city street. Riggs had thought the image might work for a punk band. But when Rod Smallwood came across this illustration, purely by chance, he immediately realized that it was a perfect embodiment of Maiden's trusty horror-mask stage prop.

"There was Eddie," Smallwood recalled. "It was like he'd been done just for the band." Only one small alteration was required – the lengthening of the figure's hair to align it with heavy metal, not punk. This vision of Eddie was so powerful that one young metal fan from Brazil, Max Cavalera, later the frontman for Sepultura, bought the album on the strength of the cover alone, having never heard a note of Maiden's music. "And when I played it," Cavalera said, "it fucking killed me."

The album received a rave review in *Sounds* from Geoff Barton. "Heavy metal for the 80s," he wrote, "its blinding speed and rampant ferocity making most plastic heavy rock tracks from the 60s and 70s sound sloth-like and funeral-dirgey by comparison." Steve Harris might have baulked at Barton's continued references to a punk sensibility in Maiden: "A safety-pin/loon-pant hybrid? In many ways, yes!" But that review played its part in what happened next – when this album, exceeding all expectations, entered the UK chart at No.4. For the levelheaded Harris, it was a shock. "I really couldn't believe it," he said. "It was like we'd fulfilled our dreams right away."

"EDDIE STRUCK ME AS AN ICONIC VISUAL THAT WOULD BUY EVERYBODY BIG HOUSES."

KISS BASSIST GENE SIMMONS

Maiden onstage: "It was all about touring. Honest hard work."

In the wake of this triumph, Maiden hit the road again, headlining in many of the same theatres in which they had opened for Priest. It was a marathon 45-date tour with Praying Mantis again as support, and in the midst of it came another single – a new version of *Sanctuary*, different to that on the *Metal For Muthas* album, with a cover by Derek Riggs picturing Eddie caught in the act of killing British Prime Minster Margaret Thatcher: in her dead hand, an Iron Maiden poster torn
from a wall, in his, a long knife dripping with her blood. The resulting controversy led to a story in *The Daily Mirror* with the headline: IT'S MURDER! MAGGIE GETS ROCK MUGGING! The *Sanctuary* single did even better than *Running Free*, peaking at No.29.

The band's heavy touring schedule was "testing", as Murray put it. "You're in confined spaces," he said. "The tour bus, the dressing room. You live and breathe with each other, day in, day out, and that can be tough." But as Smallwood said of Maiden's global strategy: "We wanted to do big things in Europe and America. Some bands were huge in Britain but meant nothing elsewhere. We were looking at the whole world." And at the end of August – following an appearance at the Reading Festival as special guests to a band that Harris much admired, UFO – Maiden embarked on their first European tour, opening for KISS.

It was KISS bassist Gene Simmons who picked Maiden for this tour. He told Smallwood: "Iron Maiden is going to take over from KISS as the biggest merchandising band in America." And as he later elaborated: "Maiden immediately struck me as a band with huge potential. The band was both musical and powerful, and being the capitalist pig that I am, Eddie struck me as an iconic visual that would buy everybody in the band big houses."

Over 24 dates, Maiden played to more than 350,000 people, and it was during this tour that Paul Di'Anno had a moment he would remember for the rest of his life. "I saw Gene Simmons – one of the richest and most famous rock stars in the Western world – wearing a fucking Iron Maiden t-shirt," he said. "That was when I realized the world had finally gone mad." But for Dennis Stratton, the end of the road was near.

As Smallwood saw it, Stratton was always a square peg in a round hole. "Dennis liked the Eagles," he said, "and wore red strides and a floppy white top. Sadly, he just wasn't very metal." Stratton's last act with Maiden was the recording of a one-off single, *Women In Uniform*, a cover of a corny number by Australian band Skyhooks. When the single was released in November, to coincide with the final UK leg of the tour, Stratton had been fired. His replacement was Adrian Smith, an old friend of Dave Murray's. "Adrian and I were in a band together, way back," Murray said. "Before I joined Maiden in '75." With Smith broken in on that tour, the band promptly set to work on their second album. And this time, they had the producer that Steve Harris had wanted all along.

According to Dave Murray, the second album, *Killers*, was "the real turning point" for Iron Maiden. "I think the band really kicked on from the first album," he said, "and a big part of that was having Martin Birch as our producer. We were all big fans of Martin's work with Deep Purple. We also loved what he did with Black Sabbath on *Heaven And Hell*, so for Martin to come on board for *Killers* was fantastic. He brought something new to our sound. On the first album we were playing fast, almost like punk rock, but with more melody. Martin's production on *Killers* gave us a little more polish, without losing our edge. The whole album was really powerful and atmospheric, and it was Martin Birch who brought that out of us."

Killers was recorded in December 1980 at London's Battery Studios. Harris said: "Just like the first album, we had a lot of songs that we'd been playing live. I only had to write three new ones."

The album featured ten songs: nine written by Harris alone, the title track by Harris and Di'Anno. The latter was a heavy drama with grisly lyrics and a dominant performance from the singer. As Murray said: "Paul sounded great on *Killers*, and that song had such a pure and raw energy." *Wrathchild* had a dark intensity and an irresistible force, this new version, sharply focused by Birch, so much heavier than the *Metal For Muthas* cut. There was blazing energy in *Another Life*, *Innocent Exile*, *Purgatory* and *Drifter*, and an epic feel to the instrumental *Genghis Khan*. And in the three newly written tracks, there was a second

"PAUL DI'ANNO WAS READ THE RIOT ACT AND GIVEN CHANCES TO PUT THINGS RIGHT. BUT HE DIDN'T PUT THINGS RIGHT."

STEVE HARRIS

Maiden in 1981 with new boy Adrian Smith, second right.

GETTY X2

instrumental piece, *The Ides Of March*, to serve as the album's grandiose intro; a semi-acoustic number, *Prodigal Son*, to add a different texture; and a spiritual heir to *Phantom Of The Opera* in the blood and thunder of the Edgar Allen Poe-inspired *Murders In The Rue Morgue*.

What Derek Riggs created for the cover of *Killers* was fittingly gruesome, with Eddie as an axe-wielding maniac grinning with pleasure as his victim falls. In the background, an East End street scene, featuring a sex shop, the figure of Charlotte The Harlot lit in red in a window above, and the Ruskin Arms, the pub where many early Maiden gigs were staged.

Ironically, given its cover, *Killers* was the subject of a hatchet job by *Sounds* critic Robbi Millar, who slammed the album as "a failure" and described much of its contents as "well dodgy". The only positive review came from Malcolm Dome in *Record Mirror*. But as Harris said: "We knew it was a bloody good album."

When *Killers* was released on February 29, 1981, the band had already begun a UK tour, the first phase of a worldwide campaign that would stretch to 113 dates. *Killers* reached No. 12 in the UK, eight places lower than the first album's peak position. But as the tour progressed, sales of *Killers* eventually passed 750,000, more than double that of the debut, with 150,000 units shifted in America. "It was all about touring," Adrian Smith said. "Honest hard work. It wasn't about going for the big commercial album. We did what we did. And a lot of that was down to Steve leading the band. He's very straight ahead."

On the UK tour, Maiden's support act was Trust, the French punk-metal band that had been championed by AC/DC singer Bon Scott, and featured a young, flat-nosed British drummer by the name of Nicko McBrain. It was when Maiden ventured into Europe in May that the first signs of trouble came. Paul Di'Anno had always had a taste for the rock'n'roll lifestyle, and after he blew out his voice due to excessive partying, several gigs in Germany were cancelled.

"Paul was a larger than life character," Harris said. "He was an important part of the band, and on the surface of it, what people could see, it was working well with Paul. But we had this rule: people have to remember what they're there for. We never cared what they did anywhere else, as long as they did their gig. And Paul was getting totally fucked up." Di'Anno admitted as much: "It wasn't just that I was snorting a bit of coke," he said. "I was going for it non-stop, 24 hours a day."

The simple fact was that Iron Maiden could not carry passengers. Touring was key to the band's development. And while Di'Anno managed to keep it together for another three months – through dates in the Far East, where the live EP *Maiden Japan* was recorded, and in North America, where the band opened again for Judas Priest – it was clear to Harris that a tough decision had to be made.

"Paul was given chances," he said. "He was read the riot act, and given the chance to put things right. But he didn't put things right. And we knew that if we didn't do something we'd go down hill pretty sharply and that would be the end of it."

When the band returned to Europe in August, Harris and Smallwood attended the Reading Festival to watch NWOBHM group Samson and meet with their singer. Bruce Dickinson had first seen Iron Maiden play live in May 1979 when they supported Samson at the Music Machine club in London. "It was blindingly obvious," he said, "that Maiden were going to be massive. This hyper-kinetic band, it was really a force of nature. And Paul Di'Anno, he was okay, but I though, 'I could really do something with that band!'" A few days after his meeting with Harris and Smallwood at Reading, Dickinson auditioned in secret for Maiden, before the band set out with Di'Anno for the last run of European shows.

According to Di'Anno, the catalyst for his exit from the band was the death in 1981 of his grandfather, the man who had inspired *Remember Tomorrow*. "After losing my grandad," he said, "being in a rock band just didn't seem so important anymore." Di'Anno's final show as the singer for Iron Maiden was in Copenhage n on September 10, 1981. The matter was resolved in a meeting with the band and Rod Smallwood. "It was a civilized discussion," Di'Anno recalled. "It was literally a case of Rod saying, 'Paul, we think it's best if you leave Maiden,' and me saying, 'That's alright, I was going to resign anyway.'"

Harris was sad that it had come to this. "I didn't like doing what I had to do," he said. "We were all gutted to lose Paul, and we tried hard to keep him in the band, but he didn't try hard enough himself." He also understood what a gamble this was. "Changing a singer is a massive thing for any band. And we'd done well with the first two albums. We knew we didn't have any choice but to make the change, but you don't know what's going to happen next."

Iron Maiden had come so far in such a short space of time, and yet, in September 1981, as they waited to announce Bruce Dickinson as the band's new singer, Steve Harris was in one sense back where he was in January 1980 – a worried man. "No matter how good Bruce was, there was no guarantee that Maiden fans were going to take to him," he said. "It was a very, very worrying time. We knew Bruce was good, but he was very different to Paul. So you're thinking, are people going to accept this?" As it turned out, Harris had the answer to that question, and it was quite simple. "I just thought, well, they'll have to!"

'WOE TO YOU, OH EARTH AND SEA
FOR THE DEVIL SENDS THE BEAST WITH WRATH
BECAUSE HE KNOWS THAT TIME IS SHORT.
LET HIM WHO HATH UNDERSTANDING
RECKON THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST
FOR IT IS A HUMAN NUMBER.
ITS NUMBER IS…
SIX HUNDRED AND SIXTY-SIX'

Before *The Number Of The Beast*, **Iron Maiden** were just part of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. After it they were a worldwide major band. But sacking their 'problem' singer wasn't the only price they had to pay for its success.

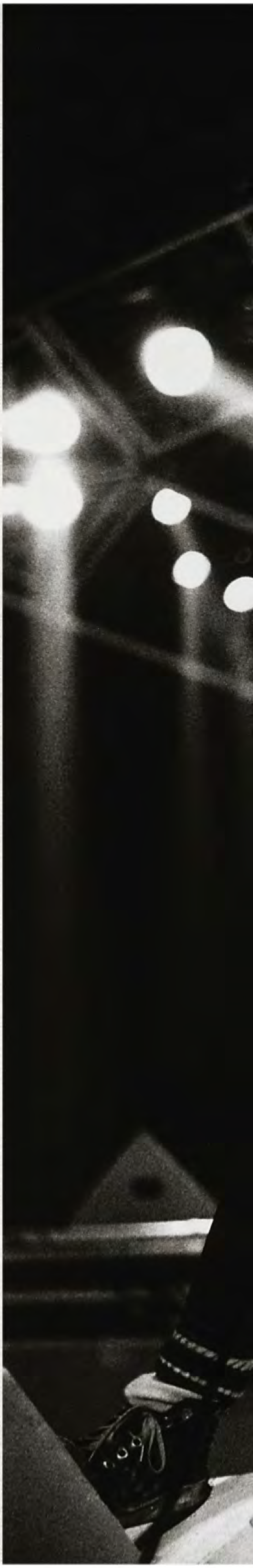
Words: **Paul Brannigan** Portrait: **Ross Halfin**

In the summer of 1981, Iron Maiden took the decision to fire singer Paul Di'Anno. It was a bold move. The brash, cocksure, 23-year-old East Londoner was a hero to the headbangers, earthdogs, hell rats and rivet-heads whose fanatical support had propelled Maiden to the forefront of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. His expulsion from the band not only marked the end of an era, but also was viewed with a certain amount of unease by long-term supporters. There was genuine concern that, having failed to match the Top 10 success of 1980's self-titled debut album with the more considered follow-up, *Killers*, Maiden were now thinking about a stylistic makeover more attuned to the lucrative, but notoriously fickle, American rock market.

In December 1981, when the freshly minted *Kerrang!* magazine published its first Readers' Poll, Maiden were conspicuous by their absence in the Best Band category. The slight didn't escape the attention of bassist and founder Steve Harris, but he had more pressing matters to focus on. At the time, Maiden were holed up in an East London rehearsal studio with a new singer, 23-year-old Bruce Dickinson, but as yet no new songs for their crucial third album. The pressure was on the young band as never before. But with their backs to the wall, Maiden responded magnificently. Just four months later they emerged with *The Number Of The Beast*, a record that not only redefined their own career, but also served as a benchmark for every heavy metal album that has followed over the past 30 years.

Steve Harris: We knew that it was a big deal to change our singer, but we also knew that we couldn't carry on with Paul. When he first got involved with the band, Rod [Smallwood, manager] asked me was there any potential problems that might crop up in the future that he should know about. And I said: "I've got to be honest. There may be a problem with Paul, because sometimes his attitude is a bit weird."

Paul Di'Anno: By the time of *Killers* the band was getting a bit more technical. I didn't think the songs had the same attack, and I started losing interest. I felt that I might be letting people down by voicing my doubts, so I said nothing. But then it built up to the point where I was rubbing Steve up the wrong way.



Taking it in his stride: Bruce Dickinson's arrival in Maiden was a key element in their early success.

Celebrating Bruce signing his Maiden contract: (clockwise from top left) Adrian Smith, Steve Harris, Dave Murray, Bruce Dickinson and Clive Burr.

Steve Harris: I always thought as the band gets more successful maybe he'll be more into it. But, if anything, the bigger we got, the worse he got.

Rod Smallwood: Paul started to get a bit into the whole 'lifestyle' aspect of being a rock star. And I was like, well you better fucking control it, I'm gonna be watching you. I knew the only thing that could fuck up Maiden was themselves. But Paul was so over-the-top. He started having vocal problems, he smoked like a chimney, he drank brandy, now he's doing a bit of coke and speed too, and he was missing gigs."

Steve Harris: I'm not into drugs myself, never have been. But I'm not against other people doing what they like – as long as it don't fuck up their gig. Well, Paul was letting it fuck up his gig.

Paul Di'Anno: When you're fucked up on drugs and alcohol you turn into a complete prick. But I did feel relief when I played that last gig.

Iron Maiden's final gig with Di'Anno took place at Odd Fellows Mansion in Copenhagen, Denmark on September 10, 1981. Future Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich was among those in the audience to see him take his final bow. But Steve Harris was already searching for a new singer weeks before Di'Anno was shown the door. Former Back Street Crawler frontman Terry Slesser was auditioned behind Di'Anno's back, but his whisky-soaked rasp didn't gel with Maiden's more technical material. Harris turned his attention to the flashy, flamboyantly dressed frontman with Maiden's NWOBHM peers Samson, Worksop-born Bruce Dickinson, aka Bruce Bruce.

Bruce Dickinson: Samson only played a few gigs with Maiden on the same bill, but I was acutely aware that they had a big following. I checked them out when Samson were headlining above them at a venue called the Music Machine. I got goosebumps watching them. It gave me the same feeling I got as a kid listening to *Deep Purple In Rock*. I remember thinking, wow, this is like Purple for the 80s. I was looking at Paul, thinking I should be up there.

Steve Harris: I'd never been much into Samson, but I'd always thought their singer was good. I thought, yeah, the bloke's got a really good voice and he knows how to work a crowd. I thought he sounded a bit like Ian Gillan, actually. When the shit really hit the fan with Paul, he was one of the first people I thought of. Rod wasn't keen.

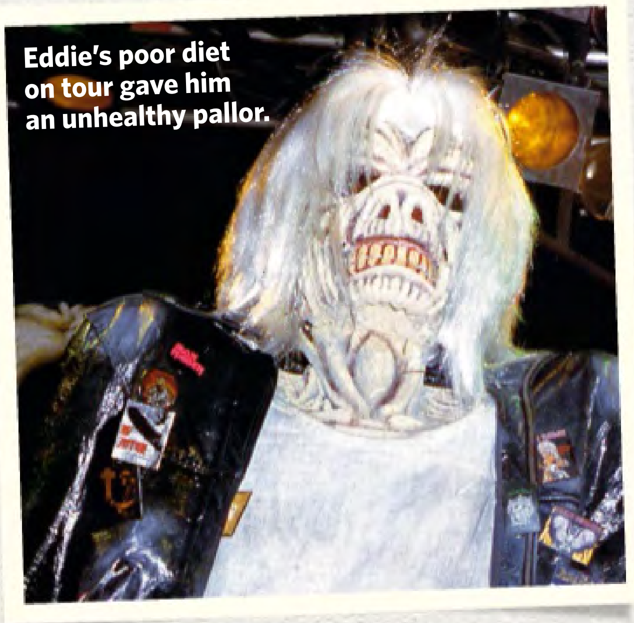
Rod Smallwood: I hadn't even met Bruce, but I didn't really like him. I thought Bruce Bruce was a stupid name, I thought the white thing he used to wear on stage looked really naff, and also Samson had messed about with Maiden before I got involved; I do bear grudges.

Steve Harris: I didn't care, I just thought the geezer had a great voice. So I said, stuff that, I want him. And so we arranged to go to Reading to have a look and see if he was interested.

Bruce Dickinson: Rod talked to me at Reading Festival and said he'd like me to try out. The first words out of my mouth were: "Well when I get the job, which I will, don't expect that it'll be the same as with the guy you've got at the moment." I thought it was probably best to go in there with all guns blazing.

Bruce Dickinson was officially unveiled as Iron Maiden's new frontman on stage at the Palasport arena in Bologna, Italy on October 26, 1981. Following a nerve-racking UK debut for the frontman at the Rainbow theatre in London the following month, the band decamped to East London to write their third album. With studio time booked at Battery Studios in north-west London in December, the clock was ticking.

Steve Harris: There was a lot of pressure. Not only did we have a new singer, we had no material. The first album was like a 'best of' of the songs we'd been playing during the first four years of the band. The second album was mainly early stuff as well, apart from maybe four songs. When we got to the third album we had nothing. We had to write …*Beast* from scratch. Pressure helps to make you come



Eddie's poor diet on tour gave him an unhealthy pallor.

ROSS HALFIN; ICONICPIX; GETTY

"I HADN'T EVEN MET BRUCE. BUT I DIDN'T REALLY LIKE HIM. I THOUGHT BRUCE BRUCE WAS A STUPID NAME."

MANAGER ROD SMALLWOOD

up with the goods. But you have to go through hell to get there.

Adrian Smith (guitarist): I remember going around to Steve's place – I think he still lived with his gran at the time – and he was playing me the idea for *Number Of The Beast*. I thought: "Wow. That's amazing. That's really different."

Martin Birch (producer): When Bruce joined, it opened up the possibilities for the new album tremendously. I simply didn't think Paul was capable of handling vocals on some of the quite complicated directions I knew Steve wanted to explore.

Bruce Dickinson: It was quite good, in that way, because I wasn't going to be asked to sing words that had already been written by Paul, or songs Steve had written with him in mind. It was all fresh.

Adrian Smith: I was pretty shy about showing the band my songs. It's painful to sit in front of your bandmates and go: "This is my idea", and have them just stare at you. But I thought that if I wanted to stay in the band I'd get pretty frustrated if I didn't contribute ideas. And, fortunately, with *The Prisoner* Steve liked what he heard.

Bruce Dickinson: *The Prisoner* started off in the rehearsal room. Our drummer [Clive Burr] wasn't there, he was out having a cup of tea, so being a frustrated drummer I started bashing out this simple drum beat at the beginning, and then Adrian started playing this riff. Harry came in and went: "Wow, what a great riff!" And then we just started.

Adrian Smith: And *22 Acacia Avenue* was something I came up with when I was very young, one of those first songs you write. I had this band, Urchin, and we did this song, *22*. We were getting stuff ready for *Number Of The Beast*, and out of the blue Steve turned to me and said: "What was that song you used to do in Urchin?" and he started humming it. And it was *22*. It ended up being on the record.

Bruce Dickinson: I still had a legal sword of Damocles hanging over my head from the Samson contract which meant that I wasn't allowed to actually write, which was extremely frustrating, but still, the atmosphere was great.

Martin Birch: I had the same feeling on *Number Of The Beast* as when we did the Deep Purple album *Machine Head*. It was the same kind of atmosphere, the same kind of feeling, like, something really good is happening here.

Bruce Dickinson: Martin was like a guru to me and everyone in Maiden at the time. The whole thing was just a lads' night out. We had a bloody great time.

Martin Birch: I remember we spent ages getting the vocal intro to the title track right. We did it over and over and over until Bruce said: "My head is splitting. Can't we move on and do something else and come back to this?" But I wouldn't let him do anything else until he'd got it perfect. It drove him crazy.

Bruce Dickinson: I got pissed off to the extent that I was trashing the room. When the tape was on, Martin asked me if I could do the scream at the end of the first verse. I was like, "Oh, willingly".

Steve Harris: The idea was to get a blood-curdling scream like the one on *Won't Get Fooled Again*. It worked quite well.

Martin Birch: On the Sunday we were working on the track *Number Of The Beast*, it was a rainy night and I hit this van. I looked in the back of the van and it's got about half-a-dozen nuns in the back. And then this guy starts praying to me. A couple of days later I took my Range Rover in to be repaired, and when they give me the bill it was 666 pounds.

Steve Harris: People don't believe this, but he changed it to 667.

Martin Birch: I remember saying to them when it was finished: "This is gonna be a big, big album. This is gonna transform your career." It just had all the magical ingredients: feel, ideas, energy, execution. And I think the response I got was: "Oh, really?"

The first teaser for Maiden's third album was the galloping, Wild West-themed single *Run To The Hills*. Released on February 2, 1982, before work on its parent album was complete, it became Maiden's first Top 10 single, entering the UK chart at No.7. Proudly out of step with the rest of their chart peers, Maiden were considered a novelty by the media; appearances on *Top Of The Pops* and anarchic Saturday morning children's TV show *Tiswas* followed, raising the band's profile considerably. The exposure paid off. Released on March 29, *The Number Of The Beast* debuted in the UK album chart at No.1.

Steve Harris: *Run To The Hills* was written in that rehearsal room too. I came up with some riffs and we worked it out there and then. It was very spontaneous. It came out fantastic.

Bruce Dickinson: We were on tour in Winterthur, Switzerland when we got the news about the album. We got a telegram on the Sunday morning going: "Your album is number one!" And we went: "Fantastic!" But at the time, we were pushing a 30-seat coach to jump start it, because the driver had let the battery go flat.

Steve Harris: We knew that we'd made a strong album, but sometimes that's not enough. For it go like that, with Top 10 singles and number one album, was incredible.

The Beast On The Road tour kicked off on February 25, 1982 at Queensway Hall in Dunstable. It ran for 10 months, racking up a total of 182 shows. And it was on the road that the first tensions between no-nonsense bandleader Harris and his cocky, mouthy, public school-educated new singer began to surface.

Bruce Dickinson: Steve and myself always used to clash. He wanted to fire me after the first month of the *Number Of The Beast* tour.

Rod Smallwood: There was a bit of argy-bargy between them on stage.

Steve Harris: At first I thought I was imagining it. But there were nights on stage during the early part of that tour when Bruce used to, like, try and jostle me on stage. It was all done in fun… only you could tell it was a bit more than that sometimes.

Bruce Dickinson: You had basically a very passive band, except for Steve, who was right up front in the middle. And when I was watching them from the front I was like: "Hmm, I don't like the look of that, that's wrong. The singer should be standing there." So the first thing I did was move my little monitors into the middle, which got in his way. I'd be singing along, getting into the groove, and I'd feel this thump, and he'd be there, elbowing me out of the way.

BRUCE WHO?!

What would Maiden have sounded like if they hadn't brought in Mr Dickinson?

Bruce Dickinson wasn't Steve Harris's first choice to replace Paul Di'Anno when Iron Maiden's sacked their original singer in 1981. Before approaching Dickinson, Harris asked Terry Slesser, formerly the singer with prog band Beckett and Paul Kossoff's Back Street Crawler, to try out.

"I'd tried out for AC/DC," Slesser tells *Classic Rock*, "but it seemed like Maiden's less straight-ahead rock might be a better fit for me. So I thought, 'Why not?'"

Slesser auditioned for Maiden in a rehearsal space in London's Chinatown. He was struck by the band's enthusiasm, but admits that even as he tried out he knew that they'd be taking their next steps without him.

"We tried three or four songs, *Iron Maiden* being one of them. And while I could do some of it, other songs fitted less well," he says. "I couldn't see it happening. If I'd joined, the songs might have been more bluesy, which didn't fit with Steve's vision for Maiden."

Still friends with Harris and Murray, Slesser says he has no regrets about missing out on the opportunity to front the band:

"I'd be better off financially, obviously," he laughs, "but I'm happy that I'm in charge of my own destiny."

THE ART OF THE BEAST

Maiden's sleeve artist Derek Riggs on his iconic *Number Of The Beast* artwork.

"The manager phoned me up and said they wanted a picture for a single cover that was about the devil and witchcraft and was called *Purgatory*. There was a *Dr. Strange* comic which had some big villian with Dr. Strange dangling on some strings like a puppet, which I read as a child. The picture came to mind right away. I thought I coud do a very effective heaven and hell thing using Eddie. Most of those hell backgrounds were taken from my knowledge of medieval European Christian art, which was full of such scenes.

"I spent two days and nights painting it. When the manager saw it he smiled and said: 'That will be great for the album,' and asked me to do another one for the single. I asked him if I could do some more work on it, having been done so quickly, but he was adamant that it was okay. So that was what you got.

"Did I listen to Maiden while was working? No. Working at that speed, I didn't have the time to listen to anything except my own frenzied heartbeat. Also, as I was working right through the night, Maiden blaring out would have upset the neighbours no end."

Run For Cover: The Art Of Derek Riggs, is available from www.derekriggs.com

Where egos dare: Harris and Dickinson often jostled for centre stage.

"A BUNCH OF 24-YEAR-OLDS LET LOOSE IN AMERICA, PRE-AIDS, WITH ENDLESS SUPPLIES OF PARTY MATERIAL AND WILLING YOUNG GIRLS..."

BRUCE DICKINSON ON THE BAND'S FIRST US TOUR

Steve Harris: It was like an ego thing. And it did make me wonder if he was right for the band. I don't know if he thought he had to sort of stamp out his territory or whatever, but he didn't need to.

Bruce Dickinson: We were young and we were all chucked into this huge shit-storm of success and we dealt with it in different ways. To a certain extent you make a Faustian deal when you join a successful band. There is a price that gets exacted upon you, and there's very little you can do about that except hope to come out the other end of it right-side up.

On May 11, 1982 Maiden took The Beast On The Road to America for more than 100 shows that took them through to October. In the south, the album's title track sparked protests from religious groups. "They wanted to believe all that rubbish about us being Satanists," said a bemused Steve Harris. At the end of the five-month US stint, *The Number Of The Beast* had broken into the Billboard Top 40, and Iron Maiden were the hottest new metal band on the planet.

Bill Barclay (guitar tech): The schedules were hefty. We did the Coliseum in El Paso [Texas], flew to England and did the Reading Festival, and the next show was in California. It was pretty heavy going.

Bruce Dickinson: We toured in station wagons, driving around hallucinating with tiredness. Rod said we couldn't afford a bus, until the tour manager was so exhausted one night that he fell asleep on his feet and sleepwalked off the end of the stage. At that point we got a tour bus. Which then became the subject of all manner of shenanigans.

Adrian Smith: We all liked a drink. And we did overindulge. Part of it was adjusting to the whole thing. I went from being in a pub-circuit band to being in a band that could sell out big venues. It did take a bit of getting used to that pressure.

Bruce Dickinson: The experience of that first US tour was like taking a very powerful drug every night. A bunch of 24-year-olds from England let loose in America, pre-Aids, with endless supplies of drink and party material and willing young girls? We weren't vicars, but at the same time we're not daft.

Adrian Smith: Was there a period when anyone considered stimulants harder than drink? I don't think we should go there in a family magazine. It was *mainly* booze, let's leave it at that.

Bruce Dickinson: I remember being pissed, crawling on my hands and knees down a hotel corridor in Tokyo, looking for bread rolls from the room service trays because I was so hungry. I caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror looking like a feral critter and I thought: "What a state you're in. Look at you!" I thought I'd better sort this out, because I could already see that 10-month world tours were going to be my life for the foreseeable future.

Steve Harris: Is it true that I used to feign sleep on long-haul flights just to avoid talking to Bruce? Ha ha. No, I don't think so. We've probably all feigned sleep to avoid one another at some point, but I don't recall specifically doing it to him. Are you trying to cause more arguments?

Thirty years after its release, *The Number Of The Beast* remains Iron Maiden's most enduring musical statement, and the record that turned them from an exciting young British band into a proper global concern, in turn wrenching the spotlight back from America to the UK.

Rod Smallwood: It was the record for the time. There was a lot of interest in metal worldwide, and this was the album that focused everybody. Before *Number Of The Beast* we were part of the New Wave Of British Heavy Metal. After *Number Of The Beast*, Maiden was a worldwide major act.

Steve Harris: I didn't think it was our best album at the time, and I still don't. There's a couple of tracks on it which I think are not quite so good. If *Total Eclipse* had been on the album instead of *Gangland* it would have been far better. Also, I think *Invaders* could have been replaced with something a bit better, only we didn't have anything else to replace it with at the time.

Bruce Dickinson: We knew that the songs were special. But if we'd known it would be acclaimed as one of the greatest albums in rock history we'd probably have cocked the whole thing up.

ROSS HALFIN

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"SCREAM FOR ME, AMERICA!"

In 2012, *Classic Rock* joined **Iron Maiden** behind the scenes in Las Vegas to look back at how they took on the USA in the 1980s – and won.

When the owners of the Aladdin Hotel decided to level the building with a series of controlled explosions in April 1998, not only did Las Vegas lose one of its most iconic structures, but the world lost a rock'n'roll landmark. It was here at the Aladdin that Elvis Presley married his 21-year-old fiancée Priscilla Beaulieu on May 1, 1967. The ensuing publicity established the newly opened hotel as one of Vegas's premier nightspots, and in subsequent years the most storied names in the music business, from Frank Sinatra to Black Sabbath, would follow in The King's shadow by taking headline bows in the hotel's beautiful, 7,500 capacity theatre.

Surveying that room from the side of the stage on the evening of June 3, 1981, Iron Maiden's 25-year-older leader Steve Harris was less concerned about the Aladdin's rich heritage or its elegant architectural lines as by the sight of hundreds of stoned heshers slumped on the velvet-covered seats sweeping down to the lip of the stage. This was not quite the vibe Harris had envisaged for Maiden's first gig on American soil.

As Maiden's instrumental intro tape, *Ides Of March*, swelled out into the half-empty venue, Harris gestured to his bandmates to follow his lead and leapt over the stage monitors to confront the room, his face contorted with rage, his Fender Precision bass stabbing at the air, its headstock inches from the faces of startled crowd members.

"We were right in their faces, screaming: 'Get up, you fucking wankers!'" Harris recalls with a laugh. "People were sitting in their seats going, 'Woah, what the hell is this?' That was our first 10 seconds on stage in America. And we pretty much carried on from there with the same attitude."

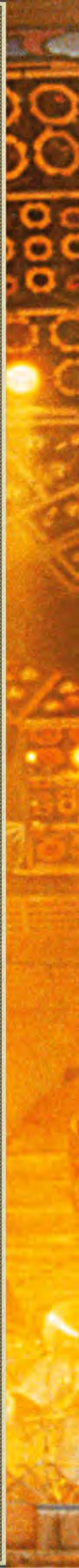
The story of Iron Maiden's ascent to stardom in America in the 1980s is one of the great success stories of the decade. They weren't the only British rock band to break through in the United States during the Reagen era, but, uniquely, their rise owed nothing to the patronage of the entertainment industry's cultural gatekeepers or the endorsement of MTV, radio or the mainstream music press. This was a grass roots revolution driven by hard graft, business smarts, intractable self-belief and sheer bloody-mindedness.

In taking on America without anyone's permission, the uncompromising working class East Londoners ultimately emerged victorious. But their triumph would come at a cost, jeopardising relationships both personal and professional, and threatening their own implosion.

Thirty years on from their Las Vegas debut, Maiden are back across the pond once more, for their most extensive North American campaign for more than a decade. The set-list and stage production for the 34-date Maiden England tour closely mirrors the 1989 concert video of the same name, shot at Birmingham's NEC Arena during the tour in support of the

A TALE OF HARD GRAFT, DODGY TROUSERS AND GIANT PHAROAHS.

WORDS: PAUL BRANNIGAN PHOTOS: ROSS HALFIN



LA or bust: Bruce Dickinson on the World Slavery tour.

previous year's *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* album. As such it's a history lesson for younger fans, and an opportunity to remind old-school fans of both the peerless quality of their back catalogue and their continued relevance.

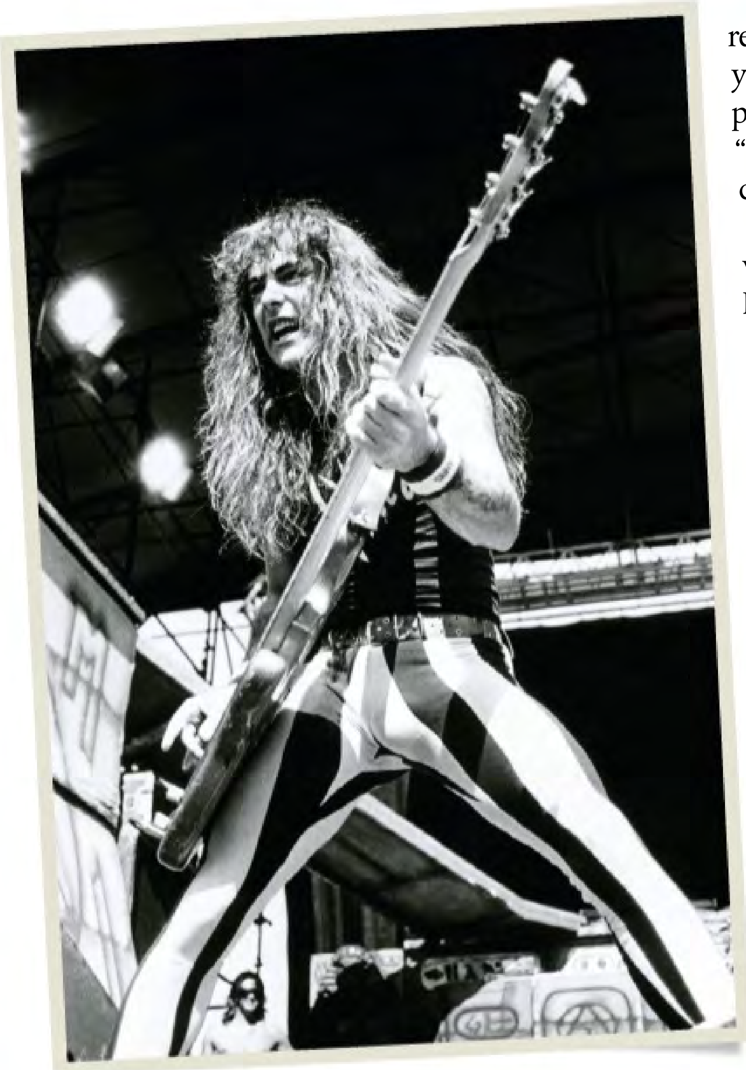
Even by Maiden's standards, the scale of the tour's production is staggering – 22 vehicles are required to transport the band, crew, three animatronic Eddies, PA and pyro – and the gate receipts are equally impressive, with industry bible *Billboard* reporting gross ticket revenues of $500,000 to $850,000 per show.

Eleven dates into the tour, and *Classic Rock* finds ourselves at Montreal's 11,700-capacity Bell Centre. As Steve Harris greets us with a firm handshake outside Maiden's dressing room, it's clear that the tour has already settled into a comfortable groove. Backstage the atmosphere is impressively serene, with production co-ordinator Zeb Minto and her assistant, Steve's youngest daughter Kerry, ironing out potential problems for crew members and local stagehands with beatific calm.

The first band member to arrive at the venue this afternoon, Harris is in good form and good shape. Now resident in the US, he's more attuned to the continent's brutally humid summers, and daily tennis matches plus two-hour on-stage workouts have him looking tanned and lean. Unassuming and imperturbable, the 56-year-old bassist has always been wary of contributing to media spin and hype, making him a guarded interviewee. But this afternoon, as he retraces the path of his band's ascent in the US, a smile spreads across his face as memories resurface.

"We were never obsessed with breaking America," he insists. "We always planned to come out here and give everything we'd got, and they'd either like it or they wouldn't. Fortunately for us they liked it. In fact they bloody loved it. But it was always a challenge. We didn't do things the normal way. And maybe that's why we're still here."

Unlike their Led Zeppelin and Black Sabbath, or indeed NWOBHM peers Def Leppard (who made their own aspirations clear with the inclusion of a track titled *Hello America* on their debut album), Iron Maiden didn't tour the US in support of their self-titled debut album. Their manager Rod Smallwood, however, did. A bluff Yorkshireman who'd entered the music industry as a booking agent, Smallwood had toured the US once before, when his act Cockney Rebel had supported The Kinks in 1975, but by his own admission he knew next to nothing about the US rock market. Concerned that his relative inexperience might hold Maiden's career back, he considered calling in heavyweight US management to take charge of the band's affairs Stateside, but was talked out of the idea by his friend and mentor Clive Calder, a South African record industry executive. "When you talk about Maiden you've got passion in your eyes," Calder noted. "Go see the American label and convince them."

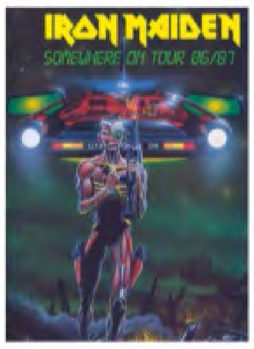


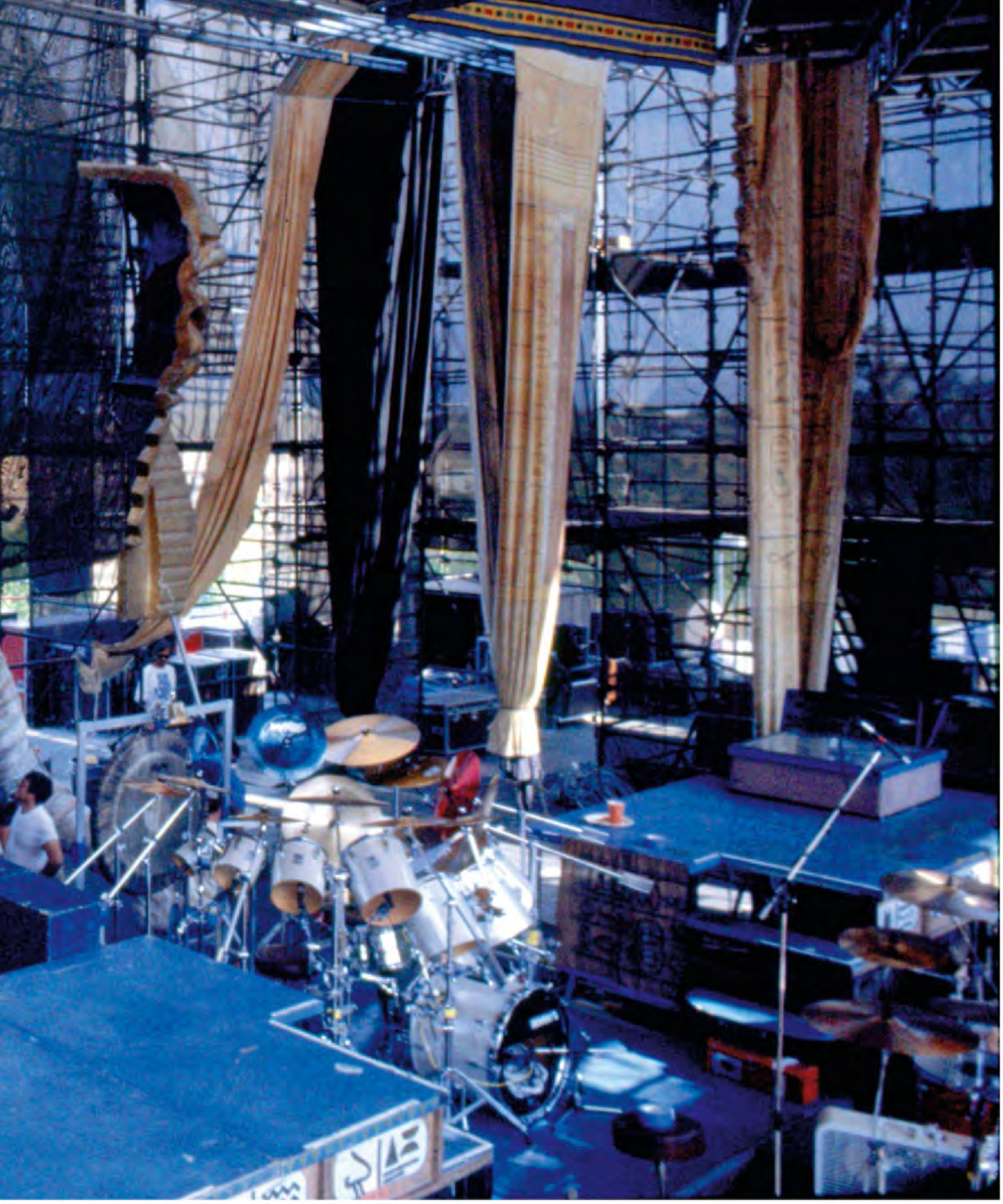
And so, in the autumn of 1980, while Maiden hitched a ride on Kiss's European tour, Smallwood went "into battle" in the USA.

"My belief and Steve's belief in the band was absolute," he recalls now. "At that time there was no metal press, and all I ever heard in regards to American radio was: 'They're never going to play this…' But the first album had done 60,000 copies on word-of-mouth, and I knew that if we got the US label on our side we had a great shot."

Smallwood's first point of contact at Maiden's label, Capitol, was Bruce Ravid, a young A&R hotshot who'd brought The Knack and Duran Duran to the company and had struck up a friendship with Smallwood while working in the label's

Left: Steve Harris earns his stripes in 1985.





promotions department in Cleveland in the mid-70s. Now an LA-based music industry consultant with two nationally syndicated radio shows, Ravid remembers Smallwood's energy and passion for his charges electrifying the Capitol boardroom and instantly charming company President Don Zimmermann. Together, the three men set about formulating an unrelenting five-year plan for Maiden in the US, centred on a yearly release schedule, a brutal annual touring schedule, and ambitious merchandising and marketing campaigns aimed at making the band's cadaverous sixth member, Eddie, an instantly identifiable icon in his own right.

With this blueprint in his back pocket, Smallwood hit the road on a charm offensive, visiting each one of Capitol's 12 regional offices to sell the plan to the people who could actually make a difference for the band at a grass-roots level – the sales managers, promotion teams and customer service reps.

Today, Joel McFadden is a record label executive, but back then he was Capitol's Minneapolis branch manager. He recalls

"There were chicks all over us. I didn't even get time to finish me pizza."
Adrian Smith

Smallwood blowing into each city like a whirlwind.

"He was a force of nature," he says. "He was very opinionated, very open-minded, and one of the most honest people I've known. He'd say: 'I don't know much about this market. Teach me.' He knew where he wanted to go. And once you were part of his inner sanctum you felt like you'd do anything for him and the band. Long before Maiden set foot here, there were thousands of people who wanted to be part of breaking them in America."

Iron Maiden finally touched down in America in support of their second album, *Killers*, in May 1981, following their first ever Japanese tour. With five days free before they were due to join Judas Priest's World Wide Blitz tour in Las Vegas, half of the band, led by guitarist Dave Murray, decamped to Seattle to visit Jimi Hendrix's grave, while Harris and Smallwood set up base in Los Angeles. On their first night in the city, Harris and guitarist Adrian Smith were taken to the Rainbow Bar & Grill, a notorious Hollywood club infamous as Led Zeppelin's preferred Sunset Strip hangout throughout the 1970s. By coincidence, Jimmy Page was holding court that night, and the Maiden party were invited to join him – a fact that didn't go unnoticed by the club's patrons. As word spread that there was a hot young English rock band in town, Maiden found themselves on the end of the sort of 'hospitality' they'd only ever dreamt about. Beers, weed and nubile young ladies were thrust in their direction from all sides. "There were chicks all over us," Smith later recalled. "I didn't even get time to finish me pizza!"

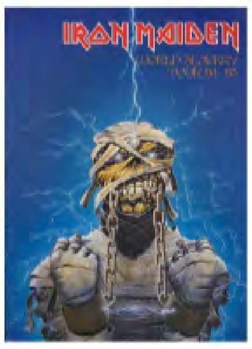
"It was unreal, just total overkill," Steve Harris says with a laugh, while politely declining to go into detail about the extent of this debauched introduction to The Land Of The Free. "We were getting in all sorts of trouble. We were young and impressionable and things will happen. I thought: 'Christ, I've got two months of this. I'm going to be dead at the end of it!'"

Maiden had supported Judas Priest in the UK the year before, although frontman Paul Di'Anno's boast to *Sounds* magazine that Maiden would "blow the bollocks" off the headliners had done little to encourage a sense of bonhomie between the two bands. But Priest's manager, Jim Dawson, was savvy enough to realise that the brash young Londoners would help draw a youthful audience to the US shows.

Maiden were given a 45-minute nightly slot, with minimal lightning and reduced PA. Expecting no favours, they grabbed the opportunity with both hands. They set off for the opening show at the Aladdin in two station wagons. Smallwood drove one, tour manager Tony Wigens the other, and their gear followed in a truck.

Harris describes the trek as "a proper challenge".

Above right: Rod Smallwood and Steve Harris.



"We were up against it from day one," he notes. "People had come to see Priest; we weren't very well known over there at all. But we lapped it up. And right from the start we got incredible reactions. Just fantastic. And you start to think: 'Maybe this could happen…'"

Maiden guitarist Dave Murray has equally vivid memories of that first tour. Then a baby-faced 26-year-old, he recalls being overwhelmed by a country where "everything seemed louder than everything else". But he instinctively knew that there were opportunities in a land where the polished AOR of Foreigner and REO Speedwagon dominated rock radio airwaves as surely as Zeppelin and the Stones had a decade earlier. "We thought: 'Hmm, this could be the beginning of something splendid,'" Murray says. "We were sleeping in the back of station wagons with pillows stolen from motels, but it didn't matter. We would have hitch-hiked to the gigs if we had to, because those 45 minutes on stage were so incredible."

The word-of-mouth buzz on the band grew as the tour progressed. A group of hard-core fans, billing themselves the Chicago Mutants, began following the band from city to city, their number swelling with each successive show. In Toronto 1,200 fans turned out for Maiden's first Canadian headline date, on June 19; in New York 1,000 more swamped Brooklyn's Zig Zag Records for an in-store signing session during a four-night stand at the Palladium.

> **"We were in their faces screaming: 'Get up, you wankers!'"**
> Steve Harris

"I was tired of Rush and Nugent and stuff like that," one teenage metalhead told Canadian TV's *New Music Special* during a 13-minute feature on Maiden. "And these guys offer something different."

"We're picking up fans all the way," Paul Di'Anno proudly told the same interviewer. "Hopefully after another two years of touring we'll be a huge name. But I hope everyone can say: 'Oh yeah, Iron Maiden's big now, but they ain't changed a bit since we first seen them.'"

Ironically it was Di'Anno himself who had changed. The more technical nature of the *Killers* album left the singer feeling estranged from main songwriter Harris, and he began to question his own role within the band. Support sets left Maiden with a lot of free time to kill. And while his happy-go-lucky bandmates contented themselves with beer and "birds", Di'Anno's indulgences leant towards brandy and cocaine – a fact that didn't go unnoticed as his on stage performances became

PYRAMID SCHEME

It took a crack team two months and £145,000 to build the iconic World Slavery Tour stage set. Charlie Kail was one of them.

Charlie Kail: "I was the owner of Brilliant Constructions. I first met Maiden when they supported Judas Priest. I built them some little hand-held props, and they thanked me in their programme for my 'brilliant constructions'. I thought, 'That's a good name for the company.'

"The World Slavery stage sort of evolved from ideas from the band – specifically their lighting designer Dave Lights, with a lot of input from Alan Chesters at [stage designers] Hangman and, obviously, input from [Maiden artist] Derek Riggs. We didn't have CAD [computer-aided design], so it was drawn out by hand, mainly by Alan and Dave Lights. I was the engineer. There were six of us working on it at Brilliant, then another four or five at Hangman. We had to work quickly. We worked day and night, and there was a lot of subbing out. It took two months to build.

"The set did look incredible. There were a couple of big painted backdrops – Eddie as a Pharoah on a throne [*figure 1, right*] and a passage inside a Pyramid [*fig. 2*]. They're just flat paintings, but they're beautifully done – they looked real. We did things like building lighting into the hieroglyphics – those details really made it special.

"There were some ground-breaking special effects, like the Eddie-on-a-stick [*figs. 3 and 4*]. It was a head, shoulders, arms and torso on a cherry picker – I think it's still the biggest Eddie ever built. The giant Pharoah head at the back of the stage would split, and this huge Eddie would emerge. At one show, they parked the cherry picker too near the stage, and when the big reveal happened, all you could see was Eddie's head bobbing up and down behind Nicko McBrain. I could feel Rod Smallwood's eyes boring into the side of my head. That was the only time it didn't work.

"As ever with Dave Lights, as soon as he got his hands on a proper budget he built a huge lighting rig [*figs. 5 and 6*]. It was one of the first lighting rigs with radical moves on it – it moved up and down and round and about. Later on it became the norm for all sorts of bands.

"If you'd have been backstage, you'd have seen a couple of carpenters pulling ropes to open the Pharoah's head, a chap operating the cherry picker, and people pulling backdrops on and off. The whole thing probably cost £145,000 – a lot back then. But Maiden were the pioneers of those big shows in heavy metal.

"I've no idea where the stuff ended up. But I did go to Steve Harris's house once. He had a pub in his house, and one of the sarcophagi from the stage set was in the bar."

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increasingly lacklustre.

"We'd have a lot of time to hang around and get up to no good," Harris recalls. "I was always the sensible one, trying to keep everyone together, but it's difficult when you've got everyone wandering off in different directions with full glasses. But I'd always be thinking: 'Let's not lose focus on what we're really here for.' All our lives we'd all dreamt of being in a touring band, but when we got out there Paul wasn't interested. I'm not into drugs myself, but I'm not against other people doing what they like – as long as it don't fuck up their gig. Well, Paul was letting it fuck up his gig."

When the tour wound up in Philadelphia on July 30, Maiden headed back to the West Coast for a brace of arena shows supporting UFO in California. Back at the Rainbow the following week, Harris confessed to Capitol Records' Bruce Ravid that they were having issues with Di'Anno, and wondered aloud if replacing the singer would set back the progress Maiden had made over the previous two months. Ravid, who had noted a marked negativity in Di'Anno's attitude towards US success even before the band touched down in the country, assured Harris that it wouldn't, and that for all intents and purposes Eddie was the face of Iron Maiden in America. "If you're going to make that change, now is the time to do it," he advised.

Three weeks later, on August 29, Harris and Smallwood took a day out of Maiden's European tour schedule to fly back to England to watch their NWOBHM peers Samson play the Reading festival. Backstage they extended an invitation to Samson vocalist Bruce Dickinson to try out for Maiden.

"When I get the job, which I will," Dickinson cockily told the pair, "don't expect that it'll be the same as with the guy you've got at the moment."

This was exactly what Harris and Smallwood wanted to hear.

In the evening of April 10, 1982 Iron Maiden's third album, *The Number Of The Beast*, was unveiled as the UK's new No.1 album. While champagne corks popped in EMI's West London office, the band were in less celebratory mood, the news having reached them while they were pushing their broken-down tour bus along a snow-covered road in the Swiss Alps. The irony of the situation was not lost on Steve Harris, who understood that for Maiden the real work started now.

In America, the *Beast* campaign began modestly, with the album charting at No.150 in the same week Vangelis's *Chariots Of Fire* soundtrack hit the No.1 spot. It was still hovering outside the Top 100 as the US leg of the Beast On The Road tour kicked off on May 11 at the Perani Arena & Event Center in Flint, Michigan. In consultation with Rod Smallwood, the band's US booking agent, Bill Olsen, opted to bring Maiden back to the US as a support band once again, booking 13

"WE WERE JUST ANOTHER CIRCUS ACT GOING THROUGH TOWN."
Bruce Dickinson

shows on Rainbow's *Straight Between The Eyes* tour, 20 gigs across the South-East with .38 Special, 41 dates with Scorpions and a further 30 shows on Judas Priest's *Screaming For Vengeance* tour. Iron Maiden's diary was filled to October.

From the outside, it may have appeared that Maiden were running to stand still – they were still travelling in station wagons, still restricted to 45-minute sets, still ignored by the mainstream media. But as the album inched up the US chart and tour receipts showed that the band were outselling the headline draws every night at the merchandise stand, Smallwood and Capitol could afford to be patient. Maiden had a growing presence on US college radio with the single *Run To The Hills*, and the band were being championed by the fanzine community which was spreading across the States. The buzz was growing.

Top: Bruce on the loose. Above: Smith gets technical. "It's D-sharp followed by a B-minor-seventh, then... You following me?"

Even beyond sales statistics and media attention, Capitol's belief in Maiden was buoyed by the transformation in the band itself. Bringing in Bruce Dickinson was viewed by the label as "an immediate upgrade", according to Bruce Ravid, and the increased confidence levels were apparent to all. Maiden finally had a vocalist capable of bringing drama and colour to their songs and, moreover, a frontman who could engage with an arena full of raging metalheads as if he were speaking to a close friend. For Dickinson, the experience was akin to "taking a very powerful drug every night".

"Up to that point I'd only really been out of Britain on a couple of holidays and a school trip," he told me two decades on from his inaugral US tour. "So a bunch of 24-year-olds from England let loose in America, pre-Aids, with endless supplies of drink and party material and an endless supply of willing young girls? Come on. We weren't daft, but we weren't vicars."

The '82 tour was not without controversy. The album's title track and sleeve imagery led to accusations that Maiden were Devil-worshippers seeking to pervert the innocent youth of America. Copies of the album were set alight outside churches, gigs were picketed by incensed Christians, and right-wing pressure groups demanded the album be removed from record stores across the south. The label publicly made appropriately concerned noises, while privately welcoming the column inches. Meanwhile, the five carefree young Englishmen at the centre of the storm carried on regardless.

"It was mad," Harris later said. "They got completely the wrong end of the stick. They obviously hadn't read the lyrics. It's no good getting upset about these fanatics. You can't descend to their level."

By the time *Sounds* magazine jetted

"I DON'T KNOW WHAT PEOPLE ARE EXPECTING"

In 2012, Steve Harris launched his debut solo album, *British Lion*.

More than a decade in the making, Iron Maiden leader Steve Harris's debut solo album, *British Lion*, finds the bassist working with a new band – vocalist Richie Taylor, guitarists Graham Leslie and David Hawkins and drummer Simon Dawson. The bassist describes its 10 tracks as "70s-influenced, British-sounding hard rock", and promises that it will contain some surprises for Maiden fans. "I don't know what people are expecting," he notes, "but it's probably not this."

People might be surprised to learn that Steve Harris is releasing a solo album.
Yeah. And I think that's a good thing. It's the one chance I've had to keep a bit of mystique. The album has been coming together over a ridiculously long time, but we've managed to keep it a secret, and that's been kinda fun.

Where did the impetus to do it come from?
How it started was that Graham Leslie came to me with a cassette of songs – which shows how long ago it was – and I thought they were really good, so I said I'd try to help his band do something. I ended up managing them, producing them and writing with them. When that band imploded I thought, "Well, I've got to do something with this", because I thought the songs were so strong.

Back in 1992 you talked about mentoring a young band called British Lion. Any connection?
Yeah, that's how it originated. I've kept in touch with Richie and Graham. Then Richie was working with a guitarist called David Hawkins, who's a really talented guy, and we started writing songs together.

Why is this the time for a Steve Harris solo album?
Because it's finally ready. The guys have been waiting very patiently for years for me, and it's been frustrating at times, but what can I do? I'm so busy with Maiden. People have already said to me: "Are you going to do this instead of Maiden?" Of course not. Maiden is always going to be the priority. But it's interesting and exciting to try new things.

No one reading this will have heard *British Lion* yet. How would you describe it?
I'd say it's more mainstream rock than metal, very British sounding, very 70s-influenced and quite commercial – but good commercial. There are nods to The Who and UFO and some classic British rock bands. But it's not the progressive rock album some might be expecting.

There's quite a nostalgic feel to it in places. Is the record a homage to the music you grew up listening to?
You could say that, I suppose. But then you could probably say the same about Maiden. But yeah, the older you get, the more nostalgic you are. You become more aware of your own mortality and start thinking weird and wonderful things – especially when you've had a few pints of Guinness.

There are elements of the Maiden sound in the album too. What was to prevent a song such as *Us Against The World* ending up on an Iron Maiden album?
Because it's written with other people. There's no way I'd bring anything to Maiden that was written with outside people. There's a lot of great songwriters in Maiden. We don't need any help.

Some people will be confused as to why you need to do a solo album at all, given that Maiden has always been your band, that surely within Maiden you can do whatever you want?
Well, Maiden isn't really like that. Yes, on the early albums most of the songs are mine. But as we've gone into different eras with different people writing there's been more and more collaborations. It's been important for Maiden to do that rather than have me dictating everything. But I have bags full of ideas, so many that I couldn't record them all in my lifetime. I tried out a few different things on this because I had the time to experiment.

Will you tour *British Lion* with the band?
Yeah. What are my alternatives? Playing acoustic bass on my own? We'll definitely tour it. But there are no shows arranged yet, because we don't know yet what we've got. I know we'll be playing clubs. Which is great because I've not played clubs for years. I'd be happy with 200 people a night. That'd be brilliant. But I just don't know.

What expectations do you have for the *British Lion* album?
Truthfully, I don't know what kind of reaction it's going to get. And that's exciting. Even with Maiden I don't have expectations, and this is a very different thing. This is stepping outside that Maiden bubble and finding out what's going on in the real world.

Will this project free up other people in Maiden to do more solo stuff?
I think Bruce will do another one. We were talking about my album the other day, and I think it got him thinking that it's been 10 years since he last did one. It's probably time he did another. Maybe this will prove to everyone that you can be in Maiden and do other stuff as well. I want to do more things with Maiden, obviously, but if some of the guys decide that they don't want to do as much in the future, then I've got this as well. There'll definitely be another British Lion record. This is my safety valve. What else am I gonna do? I want to cram in as much as possible before I kick the bucket.

out to Corpus Christi, Texas to cover the band's burgeoning US success, the strength of Maiden's connection with a new generation of suburban 'earthdogs' and 'rivetheads' was plain to see. As *The Number Of The Beast* hit No.33 on the *Billboard* chart, *Sounds* journalist Gary Bushell reported that Harris was being mobbed in the streets of one-horse Texan towns. Adrian Smith, meanwhile, recalled throwing open a hotel window one morning to find hundreds of kids in the car park below displaying Eddie's skeletal face on tattoos, T-shirts and the hoods of their muscle cars. The cult was growing fast.

By the end of the North American leg of The Beast On The Road tour – 105 shows in total – the album had shifted 384,000 copies. According to Rod Smallwood's blueprint it was time to move the Beast into arenas. While the band – now including new drummer Nicko McBrain – set to work upon their fourth album, *Piece Of Mind*, Smallwood sat down with Bob Olsen and a map of North America and began plotting a course from coast to coast for the summer and autumn of 1984: first the major cities (New York, Los Angeles, Dallas), then metal's traditional blue-collar heartland (Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit), and finally the bridging towns (Peoria, Knoxville, Poughkeepsie, Madison). When they'd finished there were 80 marks on the map, taking Maiden deep into the heartland of the US on a scale few English rock bands had ever countenanced.

"In terms of statistics we weren't really a headlining band," Smallwood admits. "The sales weren't significant enough for arenas, but being quite aggressive and excitable in those days we just went for it. We took Saxon and Fastway over and sold it as the British Metal Onslaught to make it a bit of a special package. If I'd known then what I know now I'd never have chanced it, but off we went. I remember the sales figures coming in for our Seattle date and we'd sold out – 11,000 people. A few weeks later we sold out Madison Square Garden for the first time, and we knew we'd pulled it off."

The band were still on the road when Smallwood, now living in LA in a party pad above the Rainbow to get closer to the heart of the American record industry, began to plot their next moves. As he did so, news filtered through that Maiden had finally had a minor hit rising up the US rock radio charts. Ironically, that song was not the album's designated singles *Flight Of Icarus* or *The Trooper*, but rather *The Trooper*'s B-side, a cover of Jethro Tull's *Cross-Eyed Mary*. Sensing an opportunity, Capitol encouraged Smallwood to authorise a new pressing of *Piece Of Mind*, augmented by the Tull cover as a bonus track, and to push the band to schedule promotional radio station appearances. The manager flatly refused, unwilling to exploit Maiden's loyal fan base. Capitol backed off, a decision which earned Smallwood's respect.

"We weren't into taking short cuts," he muses today. "If we'd had one track hit

big at radio we wouldn't be where we are today. When you're built up there you have further to fall. If the next album comes out and you don't get airplay, you're fucked. People gossip in this industry, and if you're seen to lose momentum you're in trouble. We needed to push on, on our own terms."

Even today, at a time when dwindling record sales necessitate bands spending more and more time on the road in order to sustain a career, the statistics for Maiden's World Slavery Tour make awesome reading. From August 9, 1984 through to July 5, 1985 they played 187 shows in 322 days across 24 countries. It would have been 192 shows had illness not forced them to cancel a week's worth of US dates.

In its original form, mapped out to begin in Poland and end in Australia, the tour was daunting enough – Smallwood had booked the band four nights at London's 5,000 capacity Hammersmith Odeon, four nights at the 13,000 capacity Long Beach Arena and a seven-night residency in New York's Radio City Music Hall – but sheer momentum led to an additional two months' worth of dates tacked on to the end of the run. The result was an epic undertaking which turned the band into genuine superstars – driving sales of parent album *Powerslave* to two million in the US alone – but also came perilously close to tearing the band apart.

Powerslave, released in September 1984, wasn't necessarily Maiden's finest album to this point, but it was undeniably their most ambitious. The centrepiece was *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*, Harris's 13-minute retelling of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's epic 18th-century poem, while the increasingly prolific Smith/Dickinson writing axis served up the album's biggest hit single, *2 Minutes To Midnight*. But the most important creative decision was to theme both Derek Riggs's album artwork and the visuals for the subsequent tour around the Dickinson-penned title track, ostensibly a theatrical tale of Ancient Eygptian deities, masking a sobering reflection on the band's own relentless drive for success. Brought to life by the Hertfordshire-based design company Brilliant Constructions, the hieroglyph-covered, sarcophagus-strewn stage set featured Eddie's face rendered in the form of Sphinx, with the monster himself appearing as a 30-foot tall mummy with blazing eyes.

The tour itself was a sensation. Prefaced by Winston Churchill's stirring war-time address to Parliament ("We shall fight on the beaches…"), the set clocked in at almost two hours, and was a masterclass in how to serve up a rock show. Dickinson was in particularly inspired form as the charismatic conductor of the band's light and magic. Behind the scenes, though, the singer was slowly unravelling.

"It wasn't just the length of the tour," he later told me, "because I was pretty fit then, but also we were playing places where people didn't seem to care about metal or Maiden. We were just another circus act going through town. I really hated that. By the end of the tour we were all taking the piss a bit: 'If these people don't care about what we do, why should we give a shit?' At one gig I re-did the lyrics to *22 Acacia Avenue* as a song about a cheese shop and no one even fucking cared. It was a daft thing to do, but I just thought: 'What are we doing here if people don't notice stuff like this?' I knew that people would only entertain us for as long as we were the local freak show in town."

"THE WHOLE THING WAS RIDICULOUS. WE HATED THEIR STAGE SHOW."

Slash

Above: the *Seventh Son* stage set. Below: Bruce and Steve indulge in a bit of backstage banter.

Reflecting upon it all now, Steve Harris has sympathy for Dickinson.

"That tour fried everybody," he says, "and him in particular. Christ, he had to get up and sing six nights a week for 13 months, and that took its toll. Our schedule then was insane. It wasn't like anyone twisted our arms, we were totally up for it, but perhaps we took on more than we could deal with. I'm not saying it nearly broke the band, it didn't. But we had to put our foot down and say to Rod: 'Look, we need time off here or we're in trouble.'"

"We should have stopped sooner," Smallwood admits. "It was probably one of many mistakes I've made. But, you know, it was really hopping for us then and I was impatient. The jungle drums were summoning more and more people, and we wanted more. When we headlined the *Piece Of Mind* tour we were a new headliner and we didn't really feel any pressure. But when you're established as a headliner you have to deliver every night, and it's a lot tougher mentally and hence physically. I just thought it was the same, but it's not, it's really not. It was too much."

In the summer of 1985, as the exhausted band returned to the unfamiliar faces of family and friends in London, Rod Smallwood pondered Maiden's next steps. The release of a double live album, *Live After Death*, with incendiary performances from Hammersmith Odeon and Long Beach Arena, would buy his boys a well-earned holiday. But where now and what next?

From his vantage point above the Sunset Strip, Smallwood was ideally placed to see that metal was changing. Clubs like the Rainbow, the Whisky A Go Go and Gazarri's were being taken over by glammed-up pretty-boy musicians aping the sound and preening theatrics of local heroes Mötley Crüe, Ratt and W.A.S.P, the latter's management Smallwood had taken over in 1983. A buzz was also building around the nascent thrash metal scene, headed by Metallica. When Metallica drummer Lars Ulrich visited Smallwood's LA apartment early in 1986 with an unmixed cassette of his band's third album, *Master Of Puppets*, Maiden's manager instinctively understood that a cultural and generational divide was opening up within metal, offering a whole new set of challenges for his own band.

"Did I care?" he says. "Of course I fucking cared! I'm competitive in everything. You have to keep an eye on what's going. The industry needs fresh bands coming through all the time, but we weren't ready to step aside for anyone."

Drawing up another ambitious five-year plan, Smallwood earmarked 1989 as Maiden's first full year off the album/tour treadmill, not knowing that by then the band would be fractured and heading for freefall.

With the gift of hindsight, it's easy to see the World Slavery Tour as a pivotal moment in the disintegration of Maiden's classic line-up. When the five-piece regrouped to work upon their sixth studio album, *Somewhere In Time*, Bruce Dickinson was still suffering psychologically. Not unkindly, Steve Harris recalls his frontman being "away with the fairies" at the time, proffering song ideas that jarred with his own vision for the band's future. When the album was released, in September '86, the singer's name absent from the songwriting credits. A decade on, Dickinson admitted to Maiden's official biographer Mick Wall that he felt "squashed inside… like a fly being swatted".

Initially the rejection seemed to spur the

singer on to new creative heights. Maiden's next album, *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*, was an ambitious, prog-tinged concept piece about fate, prophecy and predestination that included four Dickinson co-writes and some of the band's strongest and most sophisticated material to date. Speaking on the eve of its release, the rejuvenated vocalist likened *Seventh Son* to "a heavy metal *Dark Side Of The Moon*".

"If *The Number Of The Beast* brought heavy metal properly into the 1980s, which I believe it did, then with *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* I think we've shown the way for heavy metal in the 1990s," he confidently told one writer. Bold words indeed.

In the UK the album was a huge success, reaching No.1, spawning four Top 10 singles and paving the way for a headlining appearance at the Monsters Of Rock festival at Donington Park in front of a record 107,000 crowd. Across Europe the album scored Top 10 placings almost everywhere. But in America its release heralded a down-turn in their fortunes. The album charted at No.12, and would go on to sell 1.2 million copies, but this represented a drop-off from the two million sales racked up by its predecessor, *Somewhere In Time*, which debuted one spot higher on the *Billboard* 200.

"When people here heard the album, I'm not sure they quite got it. Not straight away, anyway," Steve Harris says today, choosing his words carefully. "America was a bit cold to it, really."

Rod Smallwood is equally diplomatic, withdrawing an initial assessment that the album was perhaps "too sophisticated" for Maiden's US audience, before settling on the word "different".

"It was Maiden moving more proggy," he notes. "The reception was disappointing because it was probably the first time that we didn't move on a step in America. It just didn't catch fire."

Following the more stripped-back, modernist feel of the Somewhere In Time tour, the Seventh Tour Of A Seventh Tour production was a return to the grandiose staging of *Powerslave*. Inspired, as ever, by Derek Riggs's album artwork, the stage set featured icebergs, state-of-the-art visuals, and Eddie recast as a crystal ball-gazing clairvoyant. Fifty-seven North America

Top: (l-r) Steve Harris, Dave Murray, Nicko McBrain, Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith.

shows were booked, with Maiden taking with them as support then-rising LA rockers Guns N' Roses – a band whose idea of rock'n'roll had precious little in common with Maiden's vision. It was a decision both acts would come to regret.

"Our audience didn't like them," Harris says bluntly. "We started out in Canada and our crowd reacted really bad to them. I thought it'd get better but it didn't that much. Axl really had the hump with the crowd, and he used to get pissed off and it just rubbed people up the wrong way."

"To us, the whole thing was ridiculous," Slash wrote in his 2007 autobiography. "We hated their stage show on sight and had a hard time playing with that ice scene backdrop behind us every night. We were so out of place that it was a challenge. That band is a British institution, and we realised that… we were an American upstart band fucking with their very established system."

"We said hello a couple of times but we never had much to do with them really," shrugs Harris. "We had our own issues. We'd be out playing six songs off the album, but it seemed that people were more into hearing the jukebox favourites, wanting us to play a bit too safe. It was disappointing."

On June 5, as the tour reached the Shoreline Amphitheatre outside San Francisco, Axl Rose refused to leave his hotel room and informed his bandmates he was too ill to perform. The following day, ahead of two sold-out shows at the 16,000 Irvine Meadows Amphitheatre, GN'R pulled out of the tour, citing problems with Axl's throat. The fact that their debut album *Appetite For Destruction* was then headed for the *Billboard* Top 10 while *Seventh Son* slipped in the opposite direction was presumably a simple coincidence, and Rod Smallwood maintains that not one single ticket was returned to the venue box office following of GN'R's sudden exit.

Maiden were a little too preoccupied with their own internal chemistry to really care. Guitarist Adrian Smith was becoming isolated from the band. The following year he would announce he was leaving, bringing an end to Maiden's 'classic' line-up.

"We could sense Adrian drifting away," admits Harris. "He'd been moaning about his sound and this, that and the other for a couple of tours and it wasn't doing the morale of the band any good. We'd all come off and go: 'That was a great gig', and he'd be sitting in the corner moaning. He just didn't seem like he wanted to be there, really. He was just off on one, and we just couldn't reel him back in."

"The truth is I was unhappy," Smith later admitted. "There were a lot of long phone calls. It was all very emotional. But at the same time [when I quit] it felt like it was a weight off my shoulders."

Bruce Dickinson watched his friend's departure with sadness and a certain gnawing sense of recognition. Though the *Seventh Son* album represented a high-water mark in his own contribution to Maiden's sound and aesthetic, Dickinson too was beginning to tire of the band's relentless schedule, and was beginning to feel the pressures of "trying to conform to the established Maiden routine". He began to immerse himself in extracurricular activities – fencing, flying, writing a novel (the farcical *The Adventures Of Lord Iffy Boatrace*), and even a solo album (which would emerge in 1990 as *Tattooed Millionaire*), but the sense that he was locked into an endless groove in his day job persisted. It would be five years before the singer followed Smith out of the band. And when he finally did so, in August 1993, he admitted bluntly: "I've been creatively sleepwalking for the last five years." It would take the best part of a decade for the union to be re-established.

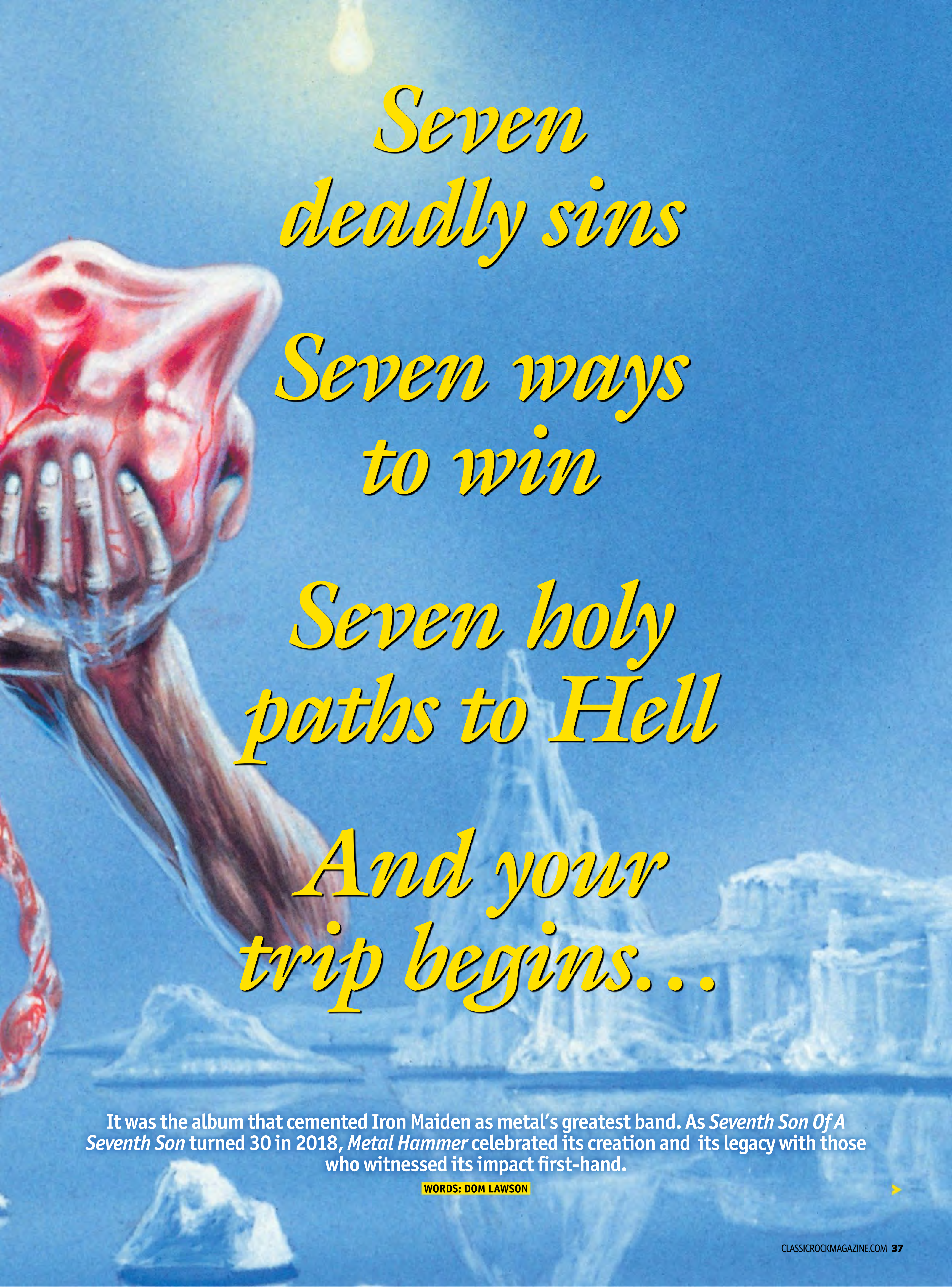
On stage stage at the Bell Centre, in time-honoured fashion Bruce Dickinson is exhorting a rapturous audience to make themselves heard. "Scream for me, Montreal!" he hollers. "Scream for me, Montreal!"

If North America didn't quite 'get' Iron Maiden on the Seventh Tour Of A Seventh Tour, the same cannot be said for the 11,700 Maiden fans revisiting that set-list tonight. The band sound terrific this evening, as vital and energetic as at any point in the past three decades.

Before the show, as news drifts backstage that the following day's show at the 16,000-capacity Molson Amphitheatre in Toronto is completely sold out, Steve Harris can afford a smile when asked about his band's prospect of repeating their 80s success in America three decades on. Never one for nostalgia, the bassist is bullish in his assertion that there's much more to come from his band, who he characterises as content but not complacent in 2012. But even at his most hard-headed, Maiden's indefatigable leader will concede that the 80s marked a defining period in his band's special relationship with America.

"It definitely wasn't an overnight thing," he laughs. "Looking back, maybe we made things harder for ourselves than it might have been, but we always did things our own way. And now we're still here, and our crowds are still here, who's to say that wasn't the right way all along?"

Derek Riggs' artwork was incredible, as always



Seven deadly sins
Seven ways to win
Seven holy paths to Hell
And your trip begins…

It was the album that cemented Iron Maiden as metal's greatest band. As *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* turned 30 in 2018, *Metal Hammer* celebrated its creation and its legacy with those who witnessed its impact first-hand.

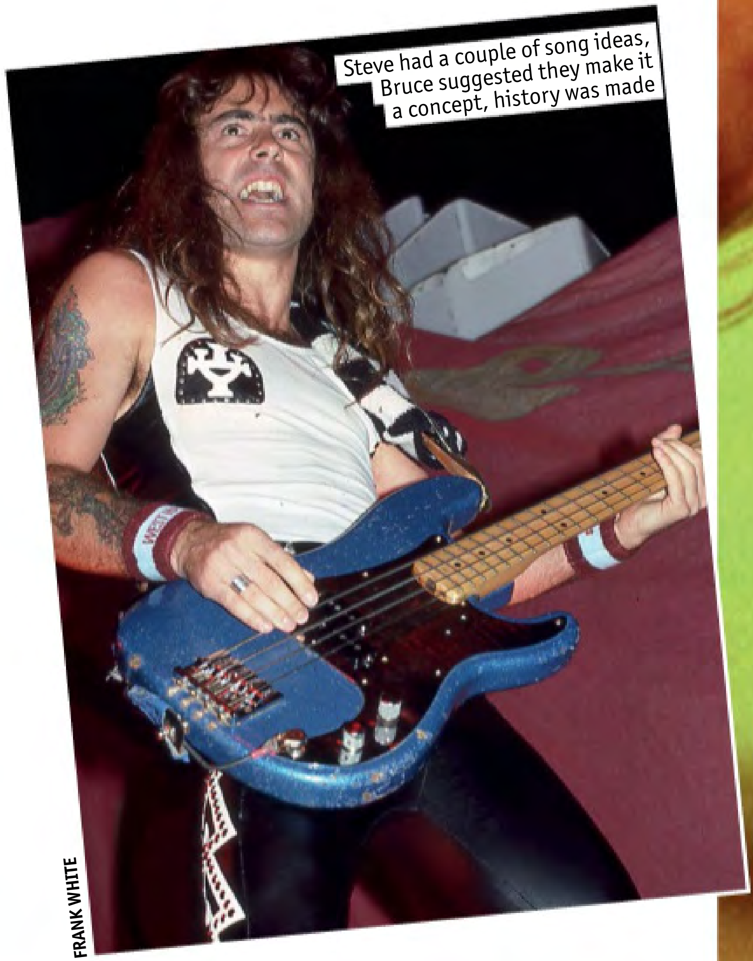
WORDS: DOM LAWSON

On November 5, 1987, Iron Maiden finally reached the end of extensive touring in support of their sixth studio album, *Somewhere In Time*. Firmly established as the biggest heavy metal band on the planet by this point, their next move was clearly going to be a hugely important one. No one could have predicted what happened next, least of all famous British 'psychic' Doris Stokes, whose death in May 1987 proved to be the unlikely starting point for Maiden's seventh and most impactful album yet.

"I just had a thought: 'I wonder if she could foresee her own death?'" stated Steve Harris, in 2013's *Maiden England '88* documentary. "Who knows? So I started off with that sort of idea. I wrote *The Clairvoyant* and then went to Bruce with it and basically he said, 'Yeah, it's a great idea!' I started then having an idea for a song, *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*, because supposedly if you were born the seventh son of a seventh son you had the powers of a clairvoyant. So I had those two ideas and Bruce went, 'You know what? We should do a concept album about this...'"

It might seem silly to suggest that Maiden had anything to prove by 1988, but there was a sense that 1986's *Somewhere In Time* had been difficult for the band to make. Famously, Bruce Dickinson had come to Steve Harris proposing some more acoustic-based, prog-tinged material for the record but had been briskly turned down. The album that then emerged was full of great material, not least three songs written in their entirety by guitarist Adrian Smith, but it didn't seem to have the same phenomenal impact that *Powerslave* had had two years earlier. As a result, as Maiden plunged into a ridiculously intense period of writing and recording, there was a huge amount of pressure on them to deliver something special. Partly inspired by *Seventh Son*, a fantasy novel by author Orson Scott Card, Steve's nascent concept soon blossomed into something more substantial, aided by Bruce's return as a songwriter.

"Bruce had something to prove," says Mick Wall, *Hammer* alumnus and author of *Run To The Hills*, the official Iron Maiden biography. "He hadn't had a song on a Maiden album for four years. Steve upped his game, too, and Adrian was in a



Steve had a couple of song ideas, Bruce suggested they make it a concept, history was made

FRANK WHITE

“Seventh Son is a definitive statement”

FOR BRUCE DICKINSON, THE RECORD WAS A CUT ABOVE SOMEWHERE IN TIME

Bruce Dickinson onstage at Monsters of Rock, 1988. The band had stayed away from the festival until they could do it justice

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

Dave Murray and Adrian Smith at Monsters Of Rock,unaware of the tragedy that had happened earlier in the day

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

wonderful purple patch, where he was knocking out meaningful, cool songs. It was a confluence of all of that and it turned into a hugely significant moment for them."

Recorded at Musicland Studios in Munich, Germany, in February and March 1988, with long-time producer Martin Birch once again at the controls, *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* took shape at an insane pace, largely due to the fact that the band's next world tour was already booked and due to kick off at the end of that April. Given how the album turned out, and you may struggle to find a diehard metalhead who *doesn't* love *Seventh Son…*, it's plain that Maiden were on the strongest collective form of their careers to date, working harmoniously and revelling in each other's creativity – even if the much-discussed concept underpinning the album was not *quite* as coherent or precise as the band may originally have intended.

Bruce in sparkling form in New Jersey in July 1988

FRANK WHITE

"Like most things, it got about halfway down the track and then sort of veered off at a tangent," Bruce noted in *Maiden England '88*. "Because whenever we've done concept albums in Maiden, we've never followed the plot slavishly. We've got to about halfway through and then done a song about Battersea Dogs Home in the middle of it… or something. You think, 'Why is that on there?' Just 'cos it is!"

An explosive taster for the album to come, first single *Can I Play With Madness* was released in March '88 and rocketed straight into the UK singles charts at No.3. Undeniably given a boost by the song's daft but great video, which featured a cameo from legendary comic actor Graham Chapman, a member of iconic British comedy troupe *Monty Python's Flying Circus*, it was by far the catchiest and most direct song that Maiden had released at that point. Despite having had numerous chart successes in the past, the band had never made any effort to become pop stars, but pop stars they were clearly becoming. This time ➤

Steve at Monsters of Rock, 1988. Who knew his pondering about the death of a psychic would lead to such a masterpiece?

GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

OPPOSITE: GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

Derek Riggs' stunning artwork came to life onstage

round, mainstream radio and TV simply couldn't ignore them.

"Immediately you got a sense that this could be the album that you didn't have to be a solid Iron Maiden fan to appreciate," says Mick Wall. "*Can I Play With Madness* was a *huge* hit for them. It wasn't something they'd been bothered about before. It had always been about *the album* and rightly so, but in the end they had *several* hits from *Seventh Son…* They did a lot more TV, radio and all that stuff. If you're at No.3, then of course they want you on [kids' tv show] *Going Live!* with Phillip Schofield!"

As if to emphasise their status as commercial heavyweights, Iron Maiden launched *Seventh Son…* by hosting a boozy promotional event at the epic Castle Schnellenberg in Attendorn, Germany.

Journalists and TV folk from across the globe flew in to interview the band about their new magnum opus in surroundings befitting of its musical opulence. A lot of time and money was being thrown at Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son, and understandably so: this was an album that seemed to be causing a stir even beyond the usual rock'n'roll world.

"We had all the media from Europe and America come in for a long weekend of interviews, drinks, playbacks, drinks, photos, drinks…" Maiden manager Rod Smallwood recalled in *Maiden England '88*. "We've never been a corporate band, but at that time [sports clothing company] Puma came along and said, 'Would you like some free kit?' So, we said, 'Yes, of course we do!' Puma was a great deal but the band insisted on wearing the bloody tracksuits all the time, so the photos from that time look appalling! You know, they're almost in *shellsuits*… I mean, really not very metal!"

Despite such sartorial calamities, *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* was released on April 11, 1988. As hinted at by the preceding single's success, it roared to the top of the UK album charts amid near-universal acclaim and a particularly ecstatic reaction from Maiden's fanbase. Everything about *Seventh Son…* seemed right. In one sense it was a brave, adventurous and musically challenging affair: from Bruce's spinetingling atmospheric intro, to *Moonchild* and *Infinite Dreams*' sophisticated dynamics and blistering solos, to the extravagant prog metal voyage of the nine-minute title track and the triumphant, skewed catchiness of *The Clairvoyant, Seventh Son…* was the sound of Maiden stretching out. But it was also an album of punchy, perfectly constructed metal anthems: *Can I Play With Madness, The Evil That Men Do, Only The Good Die Young*… unforgettable gems, one and all.

"Puma sponsored us, but shellsuits are not very metal"

MANAGER ROD SMALLWOOD REMEMBERS HOW THE MAINSTREAM TOOK AN INTEREST

"If *Somewhere In Time* was a Claymation figure, it wouldn't quite be painted yet. It would have the eyes, the arms, and the bits'n'bobs and you'd say, 'Yeah… I can see where you're going there!' you know?" Bruce noted in 2013. "But what you get with *Seventh Son…* is a much more recognisable definitive statement. Right, boom, here's the whole thing, all in one piece."

"Personally, I think the magic source of that album was that Bruce came back as a writer," says Mick. "*Seventh Son…* is the last album they ever did with what my generation would regard as the classic line-up. With no respect to Janick [Gers, current Maiden guitarist], who's a great player in his own right, but Adrian and Dave together as a team were magical. On so many levels, *Seventh Son…* is one of those big moments in the Maiden story."

If there *was* any dissent upon *Seventh Son…*'s release, it was focused on the fact that Maiden's seventh album saw them fully embracing the use of keyboards for the first time. As ridiculous as it now seems, it was a genuinely controversial move for a metal band in 1988.

"I guess some people were unhappy, but in the right place, keyboards can be really cool," says Markus Grosskopf, bassist with Helloween, who toured extensively with Maiden during the late 80s. "They created a special mood on that record. Listen to the harmonies and the melodies. It takes you >

An incredible 107,000 fans turned out to watch Maiden headline Monsters Of Rock in 1988

Nicko is all white on the night in New Jersey, 1988

FRANK WHITE

MAIN: GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

to another world and it's very much Maiden's style and theirs alone. The whole album is full of great moments, great guitar playing, great singing and amazing arrangements. It *touches* you and you have to go with it. The atmosphere was so strong. It's only eight tracks, but they're *all* great tracks."

For Helloween in particular, Iron Maiden's ongoing dominance of the metal scene was a solid good omen. By 1988, the Germans were being described as "the next Maiden" or "the German Iron Maiden", partly because hugely successful records like that same year's *Keeper Of The Seven Keys Part II* clearly owed a significant debt to Maiden's strident, melodic sound.

"We looked up to them, for sure," Markus remembers. "The first Iron Maiden album was the record that introduced me to heavy metal and hard rock, because I was a punk before that, ha ha! It was the way they used harmonies over this fast, aggressive music – that really touched me. In Helloween, we have always wanted to do our own thing and we have our own sound, our own style, but of course Maiden are a big influence. When we started

"Playing with them made it possible for us to dream"

TOURING WITH MAIDEN ALLOWED HELLOWEEN TO REALISE THEIR AMBITIONS

touring with them, it was a special thing. Playing with them made it possible for us to dream about getting out there and doing it on our own."

With their new album flying off the shelves in the UK, across Europe and beyond, Iron Maiden hit the road for the Seventh Tour Of A Seventh Tour, kicking off in Germany on April 28 and powering their way through the next eight months, armed with their most spectacular stage show to date. With physical manifestations of Derek Riggs' extraordinary *Seventh Son…* cover art, replete with giant icebergs and a huge, floating Eddie, it was an eye-frazzling spectacle, even by Maiden's lofty standards.

Blessed with the opportunity to support Maiden during a run of US dates and the climactic UK run of the tour, Canadian hard rockers Killer Dwarfs could hardly believe their luck.

"It was a big deal for us on a big-deal album for Maiden," recalls frontman Russ Dwarf. "Their show was fucking epic! We were huge fans and we were definitely shitting our pants. We knew our place, we weren't cocky assholes, but they treated us like equals. Guns N' Roses had supported them on the tour, too, so we knew it was a big deal. Maiden are so loved and everyone was there for the same reason. They're such a passionate band. It was like theatre! We were just kids and our minds were blown. Playing at Hammersmith and Wembley when Maiden were at their absolute peak? It doesn't get better than that."

"Touring with Maiden was always good and that tour was a really great one," adds Markus Grosskopf. "We had everything we needed, including plenty of space on stage, even though they had lots of Eddies and big mountains and ice and all of that stuff. The stages must've been really big, ha ha ha!"

The story of *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* is primarily one of creative and commercial success, as an already potent force gained momentum and dragged the world along with them. On August 20 1988, Iron Maiden headlined the prestigious Monsters Of Rock one-day festival at Castle Donington for the first time. If proof were needed that Maiden had hit a new level of popularity, the staggering size of the crowd that came to see the band – alongside Helloween, Megadeth, former Van Halen frontman David Lee Roth, a pre-superstardom Guns N' Roses and Kiss – was the clincher. An estimated 107,000 people marched through the mud that day, making it the biggest Monsters Of Rock yet.

"We knew we had an outstanding success," states Tim Parsons, the legendary promoter who booked the 1988 bill. "People were walking across fields, having abandoned their cars. The aerial photographs made the crowds look like crop circles! Eventually we ran out of tickets and were selling raffle tickets, so if anyone still has one of those it could fetch quite a bit on eBay. It was Maiden's big day and they were a delight to work with."

Hammer scribe (and Maiden devotee) Dave Ling was also present on that unforgettable day and remembers the occasion as a unique milestone in Maiden history.

"As a fan who'd followed them since the club days, it really felt as though they had stepped into the big time," he says. "The management had wisely kept the band away from Donington until they were able to do the event full justice. To go there and put on a stupendous show, in front of an audience that will never be surpassed in terms of size, felt like a complete vindication of that strategy. The excitement in the crowd was unbelievable. In those days there was, of course,

GEORGE CHIN/ICONICPIX

Steve, Bruce, Nicko, Dave and Adrian at Monsters of Rock. We've got to agree with Rod Smallwood: shellsuits aren't metal

"This was Iron Maiden's Dark Side Of The Moon"

ROCK WRITER MICK WALL HOLDS SEVENTH SON UP AS A MASTERPIECE

only one stage and all 107,000 people had their attention focused onto that area of space. I can still remember the chills when the intro tape began. With hindsight I'm not sure I saw them any better, certainly not before Bruce left and re-joined. If the band felt any nerves they simply didn't show."

Sadly, what should have been Iron Maiden's ultimate moment of glory would be irrevocably marred by tragedy, as two young Scottish metal fans – Alan Dick and Landon Siggers – lost their lives as the sodden ground gave way during Guns N' Roses set. Unaware of the deaths, Maiden powered through their headline set with customary flare and delivered the milestone performance that their ongoing rise demanded. But as Tim Parsons admits, there was no denying that the shine on Maiden's triumph had been brutally wiped away.

"We took our responsibilities seriously but we could never have foreseen the set of circumstances that led to those fatalities that day," he notes. "It was just hideous. It was awful for Maiden, to hear what had happened after their show, amid all that euphoria. But with very few exceptions, I wouldn't have wanted anyone else to be the headliner on that day. It was comforting, because we didn't have to worry about them. They were utterly professional."

It would be inaccurate to say that the Donington tragedy precipitated Maiden's mild commercial decline in the 90s, but it's hard to deny that nothing was ever quite the same again.

Within a year, Adrian Smith had quit. The classic line-up that had achieved so much during that first, fiery decade began to fall apart, *Seventh Son…* its immaculate, seminal epitaph.

"It was just a huge moment for Maiden," concludes Mick Wall. "It was Maiden's *Dark Side Of The Moon* or their Led Zep *IV*! Ninety-nine percent of bands don't get to make one masterpiece. If you make one, you're in the club, and *Seventh Son…* is Maiden's masterpiece."

"I still think it is a really strong album," Steve Harris concluded during *Maiden England '88*. "I think it's stood the test of time, and I think if we do any of those songs off that album live, I think they will still stand up against anything that we've done, before or afterwards."

Of course, we all know how the story played out and, 30 years on, Maiden are as big and as loved as they ever were, but have they ever made a better record than *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*? Has *anyone*?

Bruce in 1988. *Seventh Son…* saw him return to songwriting… and he had something to prove

ANNAMARIA DISANTO/ICONICPIX

"We have the power to do great good or great harm"

US novelist Orson Scott Card helped to define fantasy and sci fi literature in the 70s and 80s, his *Enders Game* saga earning him critical acclaim and a glut of awards. In later years his views on same-sex marriage caused controversy, but his work has continued to influence writers, musicians and artists, and it was his 1987 novel, *Seventh Son*, that served many of the themes in Maiden's 1988 landmark record…

WHEN DID YOU BECOME AWARE THAT IRON MAIDEN HAD DRAWN INSPIRATION FROM YOUR WORK?
"We were made aware when the Iron Maiden album first came out, and my response was to feel honoured and grateful that people who were creating their own art were willing to devote so much of their creative energy and opportunity to comment on and expand on the elements of my story that mattered to them."

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF THEIR INTERPRETATION OF YOUR STORY?
"I celebrate the fact that somebody else cared enough about a story of mine that they made it into their own story. I'm perfectly happy that along with drawing upon my story, they also brought in a quote from the movie *The Ten Commandments* [1956], in which Pharaoh repeatedly says, 'So let it be written. So let it be done.' Like me, Steve Harris draws upon everything he's read and seen and heard and experienced when creating a work of art. I'm just glad to be in the mix."

WHY DO YOU THINK THIS PARTICULAR STORY RESONATED SO DEEPLY WITH PEOPLE?
"I imagine that for those readers who believe in and care about *Seventh Son*, what holds them is probably the life of a child who has the power to do great things, but struggles to know which things he should do. Since this is a dilemma that actually affects every human being, because within the circle of our own homes we have the power to do great good or great harm, the fact that the story contains magic does not change its applicability to the real world."

DO YOU THINK YOU'VE PICKED UP A FEW METALHEAD FANS ALONG THE WAY THANKS TO THE ALBUM?
"The Iron Maiden album has reached 30 years, and I hope it goes on finding listeners for many years to come. Whether those who enjoy that music have any idea that it references a novel of mine is not terribly important, although if some of them gave the novel a try and liked it, I would be pleased."

"Prog taught me to do whatever the hell you want to do."

For the past 40 years, Iron Maiden have been one of the most popular heavy metal bands on the planet, thanks in part to the determination and vision of **Steve Harris**. But the bassist and founder grew up a not-so-secret progressive rock fan. In 2015 he sat down with *Prog* magazine to look back of at the bands that shaped him and Maiden.

Words: **Dom Lawson** Portrait: **John McMurtrie**

Steve Harris is a huge fan of progressive rock, and particularly of that all- important first wave of now legendary bands that ruled the earth in the early 70s. Aside from the fact that Iron Maiden have covered both Jethro Tull's *Cross-Eyed Mary* and *Hocus Pocus* by Focus – Maiden drummer Nicko McBrain's demented channelling of Thijs Van Leer's yodelling powers will haunt you forever, so approach with caution – the band's penchant for elaborate epics and multiple mood and tempo shifts has always been a dead giveaway.

Iron Maiden have released at least one bona fide concept album and are renowned for their extravagant, eye-melting stage productions: both sturdy prog traits, of course, and ample evidence that growing up amid the original progressive era has indeed had a colossal effect on Harris' notoriously uncompromising vision.

Never has that influence been more apparent than on Maiden's new album *The Book Of Souls*. At an eye-watering 92 minutes in length, it is both the band's first legitimate double album (or triple album, if you favour the lavish vinyl edition) and the most unashamedly ambitious record of their illustrious career. It is also, at certain points, magnificently adventurous and very plainly indebted to Harris' prog obsession, particularly on the album's lengthier and more intricate tracks. Maiden singer Bruce Dickinson – another prog aficionado, it turns out – also contributes to the record's exploratory squall, most significant on 18-minute closer *Empire Of The Clouds*, an insanely grandiose and evocative recounting of the R101 airship disaster of 1930 that crams more twists, turns and orchestral flourishes into its duration than most supposed prog bands would dare to attempt.

Harris' own songs aren't exactly straightforward or succinct either, not least the grandiloquent bluster of the 13-minute *The Red And The Black*, and with artwork inspired by the imagery and iconography of Ancient Mayan civilisation and an underlying sense of soul-searching unease, *The Book Of Souls* may not be a textbook prog rock album, but its progressive credentials are unquestionable.

Despite this, and with typical humility and a dash of bemusement, Harris is surprised and delighted to be nimbly crossing over into the prog realm, if only for this interview.

"Well, I wouldn't say it's been my lifetime's ambition to appear in *Prog* magazine," he smiles, "but I must admit I'm really happy about it. I grew up with that stuff and I absolutely love all those bands, to this day. So this should be fun…"

GETTY

New heavy metal kids on the block: Iron Maiden in 1979; (top) latest album The Book Of Souls

People might be surprised that you're a proper prog rock aficionado, but you were the perfect age to discover all that stuff.

Yeah, I guess I was. I grew up listening to all kinds of stuff, I suppose. I used to listen to The Beatles and The Who and stuff like that. I used to live at my grandparents' house and my aunts would always be playing that stuff, whether it was The Doors or Simon and Garfunkel, a wide variety of music but all with loads of melody. I guess that's where I picked up a lot of that sense of melody from. Then I started getting into more rock stuff and that led to Wishbone Ash and then onto prog.

What was your entry point into the world of prog?

I bought the first King Crimson album, but I got into that and early Genesis, the first ELP album, Jethro Tull, Yes and all that stuff around the same time. I used to go round a friend of mine's house and we'd play chess and he started sticking a few albums on in the background. I was *sure* he was trying to put me off my chess game [laughs]. In the end, I said, 'I can't really listen and play at the same time, so could I borrow some of those albums? I've never really heard anything like it…' So he lent me some albums and some heavier stuff too, like Black Sabbath, but also the Moody Blues and all the progressive stuff. It absolutely blew my mind.

Why do you think prog appealed to you so much?

All the bands were incredible. They had great songwriting, great musicianship, the whole kitchen sink, you know? I just loved it. The early Genesis stuff used to give me goosebumps. *Take A Pebble* by ELP too. Amazing stuff. I remember seeing Jethro Tull on *Top Of The Pops* for the first time. My mum hated it, which I thought was great [laughs]. But I didn't like it just because of that. I just fell in love with that kind of music. I couldn't believe that there was so much great music around. Looking

Prog-sessive: Steve Harris' vision for Maiden has carried the band forwards. Note early glimpse of brand new Maiden Audio headphones on desk!

"Genesis were never the same after Gabriel left..."

GETTY X2

at it now, I feel I was really lucky to grow up in that era when some of those bands were given carte blanche to just do what they wanted to do.

Do you think that level of artistic freedom inspired your own uncompromising approach?
It was an influence, without a doubt. If they could all do what they wanted to do then I was going to do the same. A massive key factor that influenced me big time was the Genesis logo from the *Nursery Cryme* and *Foxtrot* albums. I had that on the back of my denim jacket with a fox's head and all that… the actual logo itself was so strong. As much as I loved the band, I was upset when they completely got rid of it and got a new logo, which in my opinion wasn't very good, on the next album. I thought 'Well that's not what I'm gonna do with my band…' and I made sure we got a great logo and that we would stick with it, because I think that's what's needed.

You briefly played with a band called Smiler in your pre-Maiden days… is it true that you left when they wouldn't play your songs, because they were too complicated?
That's true, yeah. Not that they just flatly said, 'We're not playing your songs'. It wasn't like that as such. They just said, 'This material you're coming up with, it's just not us…' They were a blues band. To be fair, I joined *them*. I auditioned and got the job and I was pleased to get it and I enjoyed the stuff they were playing. Once I came in with my own material, it didn't go down too well because it was so far from where they wanted to be. So that was when I decided that I didn't want to have those sorts of problems anymore, and the only way to go was to start my own band.

Most Maiden fans are well aware that you're a fan of Jethro Tull, thanks to your cover of Cross-Eyed Mary…
It was a bit of a shame, really. When we recorded that, Bruce [Dickinson, Maiden singer] wasn't there. I can't remember where he was, but I spoke to him and said, 'Are you alright with the key this song's in?' and he went 'Yeah, yeah, yeah…' So of course when it came to record his vocals it was suddenly… 'Oh, shit.' It wasn't really the right key for him. He could either sing it really low or really high, so he went for the high one and it was a bit too high, even for him. He wasn't

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"*Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* was more about technology than trying to be a prog band."

100 per cent happy with it. It came out okay, though.

Bruce Dickinson has worked with Ian Anderson before, so have you ever met the great man?
I've never actually met Ian. I sort of don't want to meet him, in a way, because I love him and his music so much. I've seen Tull live so many times. I've admired him from afar, really. I just think the man's a genius, as a songwriter. I think he's unbelievable, the stuff he's done over the years and he's still out there doing it.

Do you have a favourite Jethro Tull album?
I love *Aqualung*, obviously, but the one I loved the most and probably still do is *Thick As A Brick*. I love *A Passion Play* and he got a lot of stick for that. Quite rightly, he got the hump with it. I love that album, though. At the time I thought I might be the only person in the UK that liked it, but I found a few more people over the years. It's an acquired taste, isn't it?

Did you see ELP live in your younger days?
Yeah, I saw them a couple of times. It

was great. But I did think that the solos went on a little bit too long, to be honest. In those days it was the thing to do and I found it boring. What *wasn't* boring was a band called Kraan, who supported Nektar in London somewhere. They were a German band and the guy was doing this bass solo and he was unbelievable. The crowd were clapping out of time, so he stopped in the middle of it and said [adopts German accent] 'You are clapping out of time! It must be like *this*!' I thought, 'That took bottle!' Hats off to him. And it was a bloody good solo as well. I'd just still rather hear the songs than a virtuoso of any kind.

Perhaps the most surprising thing we've learned about your taste in prog is that you're a big fan of Be-Bop Deluxe…
Ha ha! Well, you'd probably be even more surprised if I told you I like Talk Talk. No, I love Be-Bop Deluxe. Oh, *Sunburst Finish*! What an album. But I hear something and I like it. That's the end of it. If something takes my fancy then that's it. The songwriting on *Sunburst Finish* is absolutely amazing. Every single song on there is brilliant.

Would it be fair to say that Maiden's first blatant prog statement was your concept album Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son, which boasted keyboards for the first time in your history?
It was more about technology than trying to be a prog band. We started to use guitar synths on *Somewhere In Time* and we all got fed up of having to run back to press a button or kick a pedal, so we decided that for the next album we'd keep going with those sounds, so let's just use keys. That was it, really. We didn't sit down and say 'We're gonna write a prog album!' For me, the prog influence is more obvious on something like *Blood Brothers* [from 2000's *Brave New World*]. I think you can really hear the Jethro Tull influence on that song.

With hindsight, how do you feel Seventh Son stands up as a concept album?

Gabriel-era Genesis and Jethro Tull were a big influence on Harris.

PRESS

I think the story works really well, as much as you're restricted when you're trying to write music for a story. A lot of thought went into it. It was a good change for us and I think it worked really well. At the time, Bruce said he thought *Operation: Mindcrime* was more of a proper concept album, and that was a great album but I don't think it was any more valid than ours.

The other great concept album of the late 80s was Misplaced Childhood. Were you ever a Marillion fan?
Misplaced Childhood was a great album too, but I've got to be honest, when I first saw Marillion at the Marquee I couldn't get past the fact that they sounded so much like early Genesis. Obviously I embraced it later and I really liked them, but it was very tough for me as a Genesis fan, to get my head round a band that sounded so much like them. Once I got into the songs, they had their own thing going on as well. They're great songwriters. But yeah, those were my initial thoughts [laughs].

Okay, so as a huge Gabriel-era Genesis fan, at which point in the band's catalogue of albums did your interest wane?
Oh man, it was never the same after Gabriel left. I remember that day. I bought *Melody Maker* and it was on the front page and I was devastated. They were my favourite band at the time. They did *Trick Of The Tail* and I went to see them on that tour and that was a fantastic album. They did their best and Phil Collins did a really good job. What else can you do? Someone leaves and you just get on with it. But for me, after Steve Hackett left it sort of lost its way for me. It wasn't really like Genesis anymore.

Your own side-project, British Lion, is a much more straightforward affair than Iron Maiden. Were you not tempted to go the other way and do something extravagantly proggy?
Yeah, I can see why people might have expected that. British Lion is meant to hark back to the old 70s rock stuff, the more song-based stuff. Maybe if I do something else in the future it might go that way. I don't know. That's the beauty of sitting down and writing songs. You never know what's going to come out.

After Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith rejoined Iron Maiden in 1999, the band's sound remained as familiar as ever, but the material has become more and more progressive. Has that been deliberate, or is it just instinctive at this point?
I don't really know the reason for it.

It's not like Bruce came back and said he wanted to go in that direction, and it's not like we said anything to him or Adrian either. It was just the way it naturally evolved. We just sit down and write and whatever comes out comes out.

Your new album The Book Of Souls is certainly generously proportioned at 92 minutes, and with a closing track that clocks in at 18 minutes…

On this album we do have a lot of long songs. Hopefully we'll make another album and if we do, I don't know what we'll do. Maybe we'll do a load of four-minute songs. Who knows? It might be significant that my two favourite pieces of musicof all time are *Supper's Ready* and *Thick As A Brick* [laughs]. But I wouldn't sit down and *try* to write something that long, to be honest. I wouldn't try to beat the length of Bruce's song, *Empire Of The Clouds*. That would be daft. I'm sure he didn't sit down and try to write the longest song Maiden's ever done. It just worked out like that.

Was there just the slightest twinge of annoyance that he had written something longer than Rime Of The Ancient Mariner?

No, not annoyance, I just had to say to him 'You've outdone me, you bugger!' [laughs] It doesn't matter to me because it's a Maiden song. There's loads going on in that song. It's an interesting piece of music for Maiden. It's a departure for us. To me it almost sounds like a West End rock opera. Right from the start, when Bruce played us some of the melodies, I knew it was going to be great.

Hammers of the gods: on the pitch in his beloved West Ham colours.

GETTY

As someone who seems almost relentlessly busy, have you had time to discover many new prog bands over the past few years?

Yeah, there's a few bits and pieces. Around the time of writing an album I don't really listen to anything because I don't want any subliminal things going on. But for me, a lot of the Nightwish stuff is very proggy, those big arrangements. I love them. I've discovered a few things from way back, too, like Spock's Beard. That happens a lot… I find a band and someone says 'They've been going for 20 years!' [laughs].

Do you think Maiden's reliably explosive stage shows might have been slightly influenced by the prog gigs that you went to in the early 70s?

[Laughs] Yeah, maybe, but then when I used to go and see Genesis back in those days, some of the props they were using were hardly what you'd call expensive. During one of the songs, I think it was *The Musical Box*, Gabriel would just step into the light, a single white light under his chin and he had a mask on too, and he'd step in and out of the light and it was unbelievable. At the time I remember thinking 'That's fantastic!' but it was just a very simple, cheap trick. And that's another good band! [laughs] Genesis were mind-blowing in those days.

Have you seen any of the contemporary Genesis tribute bands?

Yeah, I saw one in Paris recently, called The Musical Box, when we recording *The Book Of Souls*, and they were great, too. Nothing's ever going to be as good as the original but they were bloody good. They use some of the old Genesis props, the actual bits and pieces, so it's brilliant. I'd wanted to see them for ages and they were fantastic.

Given Iron Maiden's theatrical tendencies, are there any stage costumes you'd rather forget?

[Laughs] There's plenty of those, I suppose. I must admit, there are some photos that came back to haunt me. I was wearing some blue Spandex [leggings] at a show somewhere and afterwards I thought 'They weren't very comfortable…' and I never wore them again, but of course there are photos out there of me wearing them. My kids used to take the piss out of me, 'Dad, what were you thinking of?' and all that. What can you do?

You're lucky that you have a singer who is happy to put on a daft costume…

As a frontman you've got to be prepared to make yourself look slightly more daft than the rest of the band. Bruce is a larger-than-life character and he's got to go out there and do what he does, so luckily he's like that.

As a fan of progressive rock, what is the most important thing that listening to those bands taught you?

It just taught me to do whatever the hell you want to do and to go in any direction you want to. That's a pretty good lesson. And it's all about the songs, at the end of the day.

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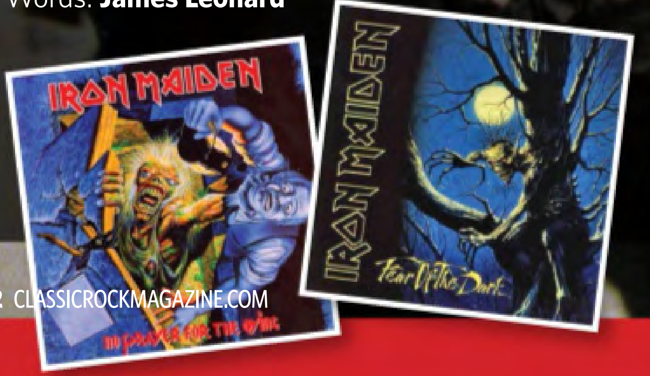
The 90s

It should have been the decade where Maiden were crowned undisputed kings of heavy metal, but the departures of Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith threw them into a downward spiral that would take a huge effort of will to pull themselves out of. But that's exactly what they did...

Stranger In A

With the 90s dawning, **Iron Maiden** stripped away the epic metal and went back to basics for this exciting new decade. But they were about to enter a period of turmoil that would throw the band's future into doubt.

Words: **James Leonard**



For Iron Maiden, 1989 was supposed to be a well-earned year off. Their last album, the acclaimed *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*, had been their most ambitious yet, and the attendant Arctic-themed stage show had given the *Powerslave*-era set a run for its money. Most bands would have taken the chance put their feet up, congratulate themselves on what they'd achieved and reconvene 12 months later, rested and re-energised.

But putting their feet up wasn't Iron Maiden's style. For Steve Harris, a chunk of the year was taken up editing *Maiden England*, a live concert video recorded on the Seventh Son tour that he had also directed .

Bandmates Adrian Smith and Bruce Dickinson were no less restless. The former had launched ASAP, a hard rock side-project that found him stepping up to the microphone. The latter had released a solo song, the gloriously OTT *Bring Your Daughter… To The Slaughter*, on the soundtrack to slasher movie *A Nightmare On Elm Street 5: The Dream Child*, and was in the process of recording a full album away from the comfort of the mothership. "The intention," he later explained to the band's official biographer Mick Wall, "was to do something you wouldn't do in Maiden. "Otherwise what's the point?"

When Iron Maiden gathered in November 1989 for the lavish launch party for the Maiden England video, everybody seemed to be in good spirits. There were plans for the band to reconvene in the not-too-distant future to start work on their new album, a record that would be a back-to-basics reaction to *Seventh Son*'s vaulting scale.

Men on the edge: Iron Maiden at the Monsters Of Rock festival in 1992.

GETTY

Strange Land

As the five members of Maiden watched assorted journalists and music industry types empty the free bar and stuff themselves on good old fashioned British fish and chips, the future looked rosy. Little did they know they were about to enter the most turbulent chapter of the band's history – one that would see the departure of both Smith and Dickinson.

The plan for Maiden's eighth album was simple: work fast, don't mess around. Harris had been impressed by the directness of *Bring Your Daughter… To The Slaughter*, and figured that Maiden would benefit from the same approach. In fact he liked the song so much that he asked Dickinson not to include it on his solo album so that Maiden could re-record it themselves, to which the singer agreed.

"I was happy that Steve liked something so much," said Dickinson. "In fact, I wandered back into Maiden to start the new album a very happy-go-lucky little leprechaun."

Dickinson released *Tattooed Millionaire* in May 1990. It may not have featured *Bring Your Daughter…*, but it had plenty of other highlights, including epic opener *Son Of A Gun* and the anthemic pop-metal of the title track. That inimitable voice aside, it bored little resemblance to his day job – its grab-bag stylistic approach took in everything from the reflective *Born In '58* to the raucous single-entendre rock'n'roll of *Dive! Dive! Dive!* (*"No muff to tough!"*). The quality might have been variable, but it did the job it was designed to do and took Dickinson out of his Maiden-shaped comfort zone.

Adrian Smith hadn't fared quite so well. The guitarist was a classic hard rock songwriter at heart, and ASAP's debut album, *Silver And Gold*, reflected this. But Smith's voice and personality weren't quite quite as big as Dickinson's, and Maiden's fans weren't quite ready for something that strayed so far from the established blueprint. *Silver And Gold* had caused a ripple of interest on its release in 1989 before disappearing largely without trace.

Its lack of success coincided with Smith's growing disenchantment with life in Iron Maiden. He was also concerned that ASAP had "sent the wrong signals… they were worried that I wasn't into doing metal any more."

Like any good leader, Steve Harris sensed his bandmate's predicament. The pair were good personal friends, but Harris' professional priorities lay with Maiden. The bassist called a meeting and ▷

Bruce Dickinson and Steve Harris in 1993: the shows "were like a morgue."

asked if Smith wanted to stay in the band. When he answered that he didn't know, Harris made the decision for him – albeit against his better wishes. "It gutted me that he didn't want to be there any more, but I thought, 'We've got to be strong about this,'" he recalled.

In typically unsentimental fashion, Maiden wasted no time in replacing him. Janick Gers was an amiable six-stringer from Hartlepool who had played with ex-Deep Purple singer Ian Gillan, NWOBHM-era outfit White Spirit and ex-Marillion singer Fish. More importantly, he had recently played on *Tattooed Millionaire*. Gers was invited to an audition, though he was such a shoe-in that he told the job was his after just three songs.

This urgency extended to the new album. Opting to record in the UK for the first time since 1982's *The Number Of The Beast*, the band convened with longtime producer Martin Birch. Rather than a traditional studio, they elected to work in a barn on the grounds of Harris' Essex estate. The recording process took just three weeks.

"It is mainly more aggressive than the previous albums," said Harris at the time. "I think that some of our fans were disappointed in the musical orientation we had taken lately. So I think they'll be happy to see that we're going back to a more aggressive and powerful style. The band still has the fire anyway."

With hindsight, that fire didn't translate to the album. *No Prayer For The Dying* was made with noble intentions, but it never quite exploded. Opener *Tailgunner* was a classic Maiden Boys' Own anthem in the vein of *Aces High* and *Where Eagles Dare*, even if it didn't scale the lofty heights of its predecessors. Lead-off single *Holy Smoke* was a scabrous takedown of US televangelists, their version of *Bring Your Daughter… To The Slaughter* rattled with metallic toughness and the soaring title track stands as an unsung mid-period classic. But other songs, such as *The Assassin* and the ponderous *Mother Russia*, lacked the energy and power that defined Maiden.

"IT WAS ALL ABOUT STEPPING OUT OF A PRETTY COMFORTABLE REGIME"

BRUCE DICKINSON

Released on 1 October, 1990, *No Prayer For The Dying* reached No.2 in the UK and No.17 in the US – both lower than its predecessor, *Seventh Son Of A Seventh*. While second single *Bring Your Daughter…* would give Maiden their first ever No.1, it was clear that something was off.

"We tried to get the album to sound as live as possible," Harris later recalled. "For me it didn't quite come off. But again it depends on who you're talking to. Some people think it's our best album and some people think it's our worst. Me, I don't think it's our best but it's certainly not our worst."

For all its flaws, *No Prayer For The Dying* did succeed on one level: it successfully repositioned Maiden for the incoming decade. The back-to-basics sound pre-dated the rise of grunge, itself a reaction to the excess of the 1980s. Ironically, the man spearheading that movement, Kurt Cobain, had once scribbled Iron Maiden logos in his schoolbooks when he was younger.

But the grunge explosion was a few months off, and Iron Maiden had plenty to think about anyway. Chief among these was correcting the course they had embarked on with *No Prayer*. This may partly explain why Harris chose to step up as co-producer alongside Martin Birch for their next album.

Returning to Harris' barn – now converted into a proper studio, aptly named Barnyard – they recorded their ninth album, *Fear Of The Dark*, at a slower pace than its predecessor. The results were more polished, even if the likes of opening one-two *Be Quick Or Be Dead* and *From Here To Eternity* still crackled with the energy that Harris had strived to recapture last time around. But they brought back a couple of longer songs too, notably the seven-minute title track which would rapidly become a live favourite.

However the biggest change came with the cover. Rod Smallwood sensed that Maiden's visuals needed updating for the new decade, and decided that some new blood was required. "We wanted to

Bruce and new boy Janick Gers in happier times.

GETTY X3

upgrade Eddie for the 90s," Smallwood explained. "We wanted to take him from the sort of comic-book horror creature and turn him into something a bit more straightforward so that he became even more threatening."

Fear Of The Dark would be the first Iron Maiden album not to feature artwork by Derek Riggs, the man who had created Maiden's mascot all those years ago. Instead, the image of a vampiric Eddie crouching on a tree was illustrated by fantasy artist Melvyn Grant.

Maiden's fans weren't unsettled by this change if chart positions were anything to go by. *Fear Of The Dark* restored Maiden to No.1 in the UK and reached No.12 in the US – the same as *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* (it remains the band's best-selling album in America).

Maiden kicked off the *Fear Of The Dark* tour on June 3, 1992 with a secret show under the name The Nodding Donkeys at the tiny Oval Rock House in Norwich. On 22 August, they returned to the Monsters Of Rock festival at Castle Donington in Leicestershire. Where their previous appearance had been marred by the tragic deaths of two fans earlier in the day, this time they served up a vintage Maiden performance for the ages, even inviting Adrian Smith onstage to play *Running Free*.

Behind the scenes, though, trouble was brewing. After the tour finished, Bruce Dickinson travelled to Los Angeles to begin working on a second solo album. Rod Smallwood visited the singer in the studio. That's when Dickinson dropped a bombshell: he wanted to leave Iron Maiden.

"It was all about stepping out of what was a pretty comfortable regime," he later explained. "Hard work, good guys, relatively safe, well-managed. All the things people would say, 'He, that's a comfortable job.' That was my life in Iron Maiden. I thought, 'It's not enough. I'm too young to be settling down.'"

"WE THOUGHT BRUCE WASN'T PERFORMING. I WANTED TO KILL HIM"

STEVE HARRIS

Dickinson's announcement threw Harris for a loop. For the first time in his professional career, the bassist was unsure of the future of Iron Maiden. He called Dave Murray and told his old friend that he didn't know whether the band would continue.

"I did have a doubt as to whether to carry on or not," recalled Harris. "I thought, 'I just don't have the strength at the moment.'"

Murray himself had no such qualms. "We were all sitting around talking," said the guitarist. "It was probably the first real long, serious talk the four of us had had together in ages. I suddenly just got fed up talking about it and went, 'Look, why the fuck should we give up just cos he is? Bollocks to him. Why should he stop us playing?' I hadn't really thought about it. It just came out." Murray's impromptu pep-talk worked. Harris had the impetus he needed to continue the band.

Maiden had another tour lined up through the spring and early summer of 1993. Ever the professional, Steve Harris refused to cancel it and the band took the bold step of announcing Dickinson's departure at a press conference just before the tour began, assuming it would work as a chance for the fans to say goodbye to the singer. It quickly became apparent that the reality was very different. The atmosphere at the shows was awkward at best.

"It wasn't a good vibe," Dickinson later admitted. "We walked out onstage, and it was like a morgue. The Maiden fans knew I'd quit, they knew these were the last gigs and I suddenly realised that, as the frontman, you're in an almost impossible situation."

Worse, backstage tensions between Dickinson and his soon-to-be-ex-bandmates had hit rock bottom. This was partly down to Harris's view that the singer wasn't giving it his all.

"We all though thought he was really out of order and that he wasn't performing," said the bassist. "The worst thing was, if he'd been fucking crap, over the whole tour, you can sort of understand it, but this was specific times. It was so calculated. I really wanted to kill him." The singer refuted the claims, but the bad blood would linger after he had left the band

Bruce Dickinson played the last show of his original run with Iron Maiden on August 28, 1993 at Pinewood Studios just outside of London. The show was filmed as an MTV special and it featured magician Simon Drake, who concluded the show, appropriately enough, by 'killing' Dickinson. It pretty much reflected how the rest of Maiden felt.

Dickinson's departure marked the end of an era for the band – one that had seen these East End heroes scale heights they could only have dreamed of. Replacing him wouldn't be easy. But Steve Harris and Iron Maiden had never ducked a challenge before, and they weren't about to start now.

Wildest Dreams

Ex-Wolfsbane singer Blaze Bayley faced an impossible task: filling Bruce Dickinson's boots. In 2015, *Classic Rock* sat down with the man who played an unsung part in helping Iron Maiden survive the 1990s.

Words: **Paul Elliott**

On a cold night in March, Blaze Bayley is in Cardiff for a gig at the Fuel Bar & Music Room.

The place is like a shrine to the singer's former band, Iron Maiden. At the entrance is a huge mural of Maiden's monstrous figurehead, Eddie. The house beer is the Maiden-branded Trooper ale. And on one wall is a photo of a famous visitor to the club: behind the bar, pulling a pint of Trooper, Bruce Dickinson, the man whom Bayley replaced in Iron Maiden for five years in the 90s.

Seven thousand miles away, in South America, Iron Maiden are in the early stages of The Book Of Souls tour, on which Dickinson is serving double duty as singer and pilot of the band's customized Boeing 747 'Ed Force One'. In Argentina, the band played to 50,000 people at a football stadium in Buenos Aires. Other shows are in 10,000-capacity arenas – the kind that Bayley remembers performing in during his time with the band.

In Cardiff, fifty people have paid £10 to see Blaze Bayley. On this current tour, in support of his new solo album *Infinite Entanglement*, there are bigger gigs to come, at festivals in Europe and in South America. But in the UK, all the shows are in small clubs.

For Bayley, now 52, the realities at this stage of his career are simply stated. "I am," he says, "an underground niche artist. I'm not in your face, but I'm out there."

The show he delivers at Fuel, backed by a three-man band, includes material spanning his entire career. There are songs he wrote and recorded with Iron Maiden, songs from his post-Maiden solo albums, and there is one from the band in which he first became famous, late 80s Brit rockers Wolfsbane.

There is deadly seriousness in the way he delivers the material from *Infinite Entanglement*, a sci-fi concept album that forms the first part of a trilogy. But the man has not lost the sense of

Blaze Bayley with Iron Maiden in 1994.

humour that was so much a feature of Wolfsbane – a band whose fan club was named, with great affection, the Howling Mad Shitheads. This much is evident when he introduces the song *Kill And Destroy*, from his 2002 album *The Tenth Dimension*, to polite applause.

"Come on!" he yells as though he's still playing one of those huge arenas. "I thought if there's one place where they'd like a bit of killing and destroying on a Wednesday night, it's fucking Cardiff!"

What is also evident, after the show, is the appreciation that Bayley has for the people that come to see him. He spends the best part of an hour chatting to fans – most of whom are wearing Iron Maiden t-shirts. Only when the last CD is signed and the last selfie snapped does he take time out to talk with Classic Rock.

"I owe my living to these people," he says. "And there's not a day goes by that I don't feel incredibly lucky and privileged that I'm a professional singer, singing my own songs."

In these past 20 years, Blaze Bayley has been through the worst of times, both in his professional life and his personal life. After his exit from Iron Maiden in 1999 – when Dickinson returned to the band – Bayley experienced depression. But it was in 2008 that he hit rock bottom, following the death of his wife Debbie Hartland from a brain haemorrhage.

It is with remarkable candour that he will discuss these events. There is also a hard-earned wisdom in what he says about his life in the music business – the good times and the bad.

And yet there is something that has stayed with him – a love of music that it as strong now as it was when I first met him. "I love to sing," he says. "It's my curse and my blessing that I'm driven to do it, to the exclusion of so many other things. I have to do this."

It was in the late 70s that the 15-year-old Bayley Alexander Cooke decided he would be a rock'n'roll singer. "There was a sixth-form band in my school," he recalls, "and I looked at the singer and thought, I'd be better than him."

He had started singing when he was five or six, imitating the crooners that his mother and grandmother loved, such as Mario Lanza and Richard Tauber. When he hit puberty he discovered rock. He got into The Sweet and Slade, and then quickly graduated to punk and heavy metal. "I loved Zeppelin," he says. "I loved the first Sabbath album – that weird, spooky shit. And then you had the Pistols and The Damned in he charts. It was an incredible time, and it was that energy in punk that gave me the idea that I could do that."

Bayley rose to fame as the singer with Wolfsbane, the brilliantly energetic West Midlands band who were pitched as Tamworth's answer to Van Halen. Their debut album, *Live Fast, Die Fast*

GETTY

Rock'n'roll survivor: Blaze onstage in 2015.

"I only believed in good reviews. Every bad review, I said, 'That's wrong.' That's how I survived."

FUTURE/TEAMROCK X2

was a balls-out, loud-and-proud heavy metal record with a handful of great songs in *Manhunt*, *Shakin'* and *I Like It Hot*. It was produced by Rick Rubin, the music industry power-player who had founded Def Jam and, later, Def American.

But the album was not a hit and Wolfsbane struggled to recapture their early energy. By 1994, they were, as Bayley put it, "limping along." Coincidentally, Iron Maiden were looking for a new singer, after Bruce Dickinson had quit to go solo. In a private conversation, Wolfsbane's manager urged him to audition for Iron Maiden if the opportunity came up.

Bayley says now: "Up to that point, I hadn't thought about Maiden. But I realized, this opportunity is going to come once in a lifetime."

When he auditioned for Maiden, it was in the strictest confidence, by order of the band's manager Rod Smallwood. "It was horrible having to keep it a secret from the lads in Wolfsbane," Bayley says. "We'd been so close and been through so much together. It was a confusing time in my life, so bittersweet and melancholy."

It was Steve Harris, Maiden's bassist and leader, who told Bayley that he's got the gig, just before Christmas 1994. The first person Bayley told was his girlfriend, Debbie. The second was his father. To celebrate, Bayley bought a crate of Guinness. Then he had to break the news to the other three guys from Wolfsbane.

"Because it all happened so quick," he says, "I had to tell them on the phone. It was hard. Very sad."

The popular consensus on Blaze Bayley's career with Iron Maiden is this: that he wasn't good enough to be in the band; that he couldn't hit the notes that Bruce Dickinson did: that the two albums he made with Maiden – *The X Factor* in 1995, *Virtual XI* in 1998 – are the worst they ever made.

As US website MetalSucks.com once put it, succinctly and brutally: "Blaze Bayley-era Iron Maiden is awful… an utter crapfest."

Bayley had to live with this kind of criticism from the moment he joined Iron Maiden, and it's never gone away, not in all the years since he left the band. "You can't help but take it personally," he admits. "You're human." His response, from the outset, was to simply ignore the bad press. And he continues to do so. "Early on I said – as dumb as it sounds – I only believe the good reviews. Every bad review, I thought, it's wrong. I put myself in that place, and that was how I survived."

What is often overlooked, in assessments of Bayley's time with the band, is the decline in Maiden's work in the preceding years. The 1990 album *No Prayer For The Dying* bordered on self-parody. 1992's *Fear Of The Dark* – the last recorded before Dickinson bailed – was not much better. Equally, as Bayley says: "Let's not forget that Bruce left. His enthusiasm for Iron Maiden had gone, completely. His heart wasn't in it."

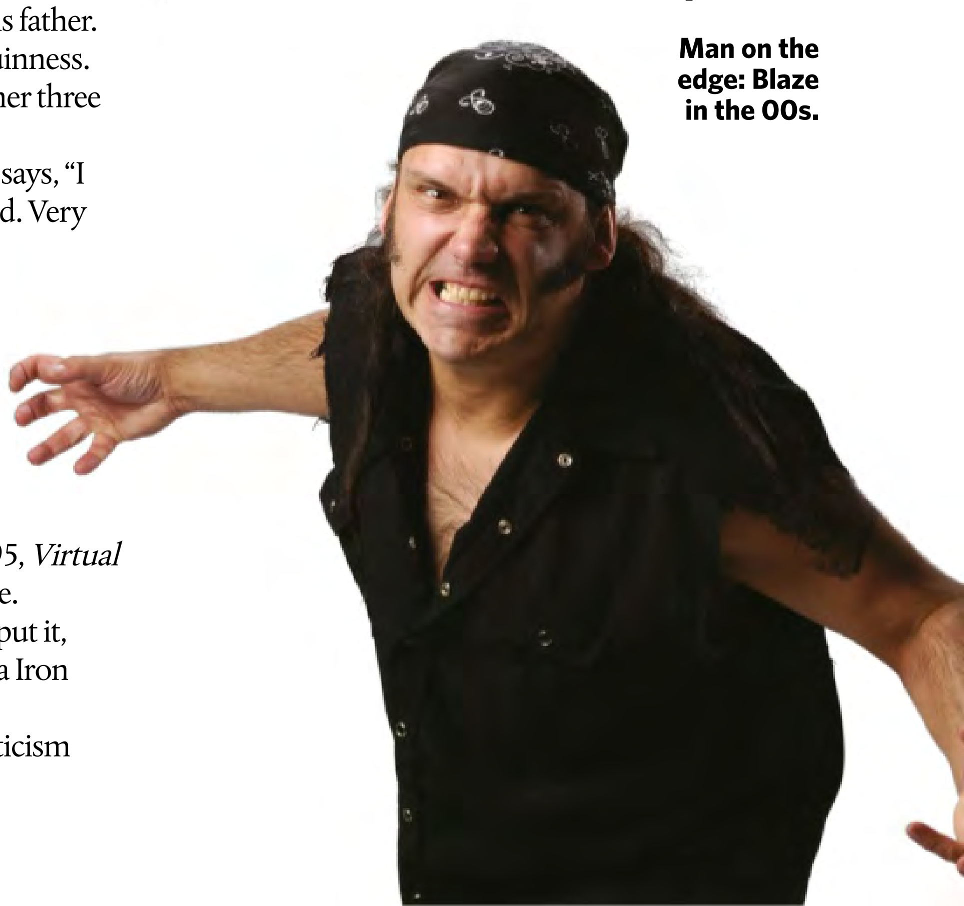
Bayley understands the circumstances that led to Dickinson's departure – foremost among them, a disillusionment that first set in after the band's marathon, 18-month World Slavery tour in the mid-80s, which left him physically and mentally exhausted. "That tour," Bayley says, "was the real game changer for Bruce. It was the kind of tour that I dreamt of going on, but it really hurt him."

Above all else, Bayley is simply grateful for what Dickinson's exit presented to him. "To join this legendary band," he says, "it was an incredible opportunity for me." He also admits, with admirable honesty, that he was "bricking it" at the prospect of fronting one of the biggest bands in the world. "I'll use a football analogy," he says. "It is exactly the same game in the Sunday league, same rules, but in Maiden it felt like I'd been picked for England. The expectation – the level of intensity – was so high."

Other singers had auditioned for Maiden. For many outsiders, Michael Kiske of Helloween seemed the best fit. But as Bayley says: "Steve Harris heard something in my voice that he wanted to work with. He wanted to try a different sound."

When he reflects upon his five years in Iron Maiden, Bayley speaks with great pride. He calls it "an amazing achievement" that *Man On The Edge*, a song for which he wrote the lyrics and melody, was chosen as the flagship single from *The X Factor*. He describes that album's epic opening track, *Sign Of The Cross*, as "a massive, defining song" – and instrumental in him "finding this other area of my voice". He is proud, too, of what he achieved on *Virtual XI*: the emotional depth he

Man on the edge: Blaze in the 00s.



Howling Mad Shitheads: Blaze with his pre-Maiden band Wolfsbane.

GETTY

"In Maiden, it felt like I'd been picked for England. The expectation was so high."

brought to *Como Estais Amigos* and *The Clansman*, the latter a genuine Iron Maiden classic.

Inevitably, there is sadness when he discusses his departure from the band. He understands the logic behind it. "They had to make a business decision," he says. "Getting Bruce back, it was the right thing to do. Look at what they've done since. I don't think anything bad of the guys." At the time, however, he was devastated. He says he never saw it coming – that Steve Harris never spoke to him about the possibility of Dickinson's return. "When they told me," Bayley says, "I already had songs ready for the next album."

It was not all bad. When he was let go, Bayley received a golden handshake. "Maiden took very good care of me," he says. "I can't complain about that." But he spent all of that money on launching his solo career – hiring a band, recording albums under the name Blaze. And in the longer term, he succumbed to depression.

"In Iron Maiden, I was living my dream," he says. "And when that dream was lost, I didn't take time out to grieve."

It was while writing his third solo album *Blood & Belief* in 2003 – four years after he was ousted from Maiden – that all the feelings he had suppressed finally came to a head. "I found myself in such a dark place," he says. "All of that pain came out – the disappointment and the rejection I felt – and I went through the most severe depression. Some of the lyrics on *Blood & Belief* are about my mental health. I felt worthless, really."

What pulled him through, he says, was the support of his girlfriend Debbie. That, and a sense of his own worth as a musician – ironically, a legacy of his time in Iron Maiden. "I felt I was good enough," he explains. "I may not have been good enough for Iron Maiden, but my songs and my lyrics were good enough, because they were on Iron Maiden albums. So I had the confidence."

He kept plugging away: kept the business ticking over, enough to pay the bills. In 2007, he and Debbie married. A year later, his world fell apart. At the age of 38, Debbie Hartland suffered a brain haemorrhage and three strokes. "When she was in intensive care," he says, "I would not allow myself to think that I wouldn't get her back. But I lost her."

Debbie Hartland died on September 27, 2008. Bayley has the dates of her birth and death tattooed on his arm. "She was the great love of my life," he says. "You only have one love like that."

He pauses briefly, measuring his words. "When I lost Debbie, things were never the same again. What happened with Iron Maiden, it's nothing – absolutely nothing – compared to losing the love of your life. That's when I wondered whether I should give up. But she had so much belief in me, that's why I kept going."

For all that he has been through, Blaze Bayley still considers himself lucky – for what he has had in the past, and for what he has now.

His career as a touring musician comes with a price. When he is away, he misses his daughter from his second marriage, which has since ended. "My little girl is four," he says. "So for me, leaving to go on tour is horrible. But there's a choice: I could go and get a regular job, or I can do this. And I love what I do."

Wolfsbane remains a part of his life. Since the band reunited in 2010, they still tour and make albums on an occasional basis. But in the immediate future, his focus is on his solo work – first, his current world tour, and beyond that, the completion of the trilogy begun with Infinite Entanglement. "Right now," he says, "there are so many things going for me."

The fame that came to him as a member of Iron Maiden is what continues to sustain his career, all of 17 years since he left the band. As he explains, very simply: "I can advertise as 'Blaze Bayley, formerly of Iron Maiden', and it will make just enough people interested."

He retains a philosophical view on what has become of Iron Maiden, and himself, since they separated. "Maiden are where they should be," he says, "and I am where I'm happy. The bottom line is, I feel incredibly proud that I was a part of that band. For me, it's never been a problem that people say, 'You used to be in Iron Maiden.' Well, yeah – the greatest band in heavy metal, ever. I've got no problem with that."

Blaze Bayley fulfilled a dream with Iron Maiden. Now, so many years on, it is a different kind of dream that drives him. "I've played to ten thousand people a night, and I've played to fifty people a night," he says. "But really, I don't care anymore, just as long as I'm still making music.

"Music is my life. I put my heart and soul into it. My hero was Ronnie James Dio. He worked until he died. And that's what I intend to do. All that matters now is that I just keep going. For me, that is the dream."

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The 00s

It was the decade that marked the rebirth of Iron Maiden, from the return of Bruce Dickinson to a string of world-beating albums that didn't just put them back on top but ensured they came back bigger and stronger than ever before. And we were with them all the way...

Steve Harris, Nicko McBrain, Bruce Dickinson, Dave Murray, Janick Gers and Adrian Smith backstage at Chicago's UIC Pavillion during their Brave New World Tour, October 17, 2000

"HAVING THREE LEAD GUITARISTS GAVE US A DIFFERENT EDGE"
STEVE HARRIS

GETTY

HOW WE MADE BRAVE NEW WORLD

When Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith returned to Iron Maiden in 1999, the pressure was on the metal legends to deliver an album that could take them back to greatness

WORDS: DOM LAWSON

It might be hard to imagine now, but Iron Maiden were struggling at the end of the 1990s. Today, the UK's undisputed kings of heavy metal casually stalk the globe with vast, eye-busting stage productions, at the peak of their powers and more successful than ever. But after two good-but-not-great albums with vocalist Blaze Bayley, who replaced Bruce Dickinson back in 1994, Maiden were visibly battling the law of diminishing returns, playing in smaller venues to smaller crowds in many parts of the world; their status as metal's unassailable standard bearers was now in question.

But in 1999, the news that Blaze was gone and Bruce and guitarist Adrian Smith (who had quit Maiden in 1990) were to return to the fold sent the band's global army of fans into a state of wide-eyed hysteria. A new, six-man Maiden (Bruce, bassist Steve Harris, drummer Nicko McBrain and the newly named 'Three Amigos': guitarists Dave Murray, Janick Gers and the returning Smith) announced that they were to tour the US and Europe and *then*, most excitingly, make a brand-new studio album.

"From the moment we started the songwriting process, we saw the tour as being just a small blip on the way to making this record," Bruce told *Hammer*'s Clay Marshall in 2000. "[It was] something to cheer us up. The tour, in many ways, was the beginning of the campaign for this album. It started the ball rolling. It started winding people up. People realised, 'If they can still do this live, can they still make a great record together?' It posed a question, and [prompted] a great deal of discussion."

The Ed Hunter tour kicked off in the US on July 11, 1999, continuing for 31 dates that noisily confirmed Iron Maiden were back to reclaim their throne. It ended on October 1 in Athens, at which point the band were in the thick of writing and recording the album that would either put them back at the top of the metal tree… or not. No pressure, then, for producer Kevin Shirley, who had mixed feelings about being offered the job of facilitating such an iconic band's comeback.

"To be honest, when I got the call I was less enthusiastic than I should have been, because it appeared to me that they were a band that had maybe lost their way," he recalls. "I was concerned because I'd had a look at where they'd been and the trajectory of the albums. It seemed like there was a pattern emerging and it didn't look good. So I was apprehensive about it."

He needn't have worried, of course. If one thing has characterised Iron Maiden's four-decade reign, it is a steely determination to *never* let the fans down. Combined with the kind of confidence that only comes when you know you're the best, Maiden arrived at Guillaume Tell studios – a converted movie theatre in Paris, a brisk stroll away from the Champs-Elysées – with

To be honest we really dig a lot of the Blaze-era stuff, but, you know…

an abundance of musical ideas and a shared desire to make the best record possible. In a sense, it must have felt like business as usual for Steve Harris, Bruce and the others. But as far as their new producer was concerned, a new era demanded a fresh approach.

"Obviously I grew up with the old-school recording methods, where you'd record the drums first, then the bass and the guitars, and it took forever," Kevin explains. "But I could see how there was this intangible *energy* you'd get, just from having musicians playing *together*. So I was dead keen on Maiden doing that. Steve, in particular, was very hesitant about it. He said he didn't think it was gonna work, so I said, 'If it doesn't work then we'll go back and do it as you've done previously, but let's give it a try!' Pretty much, as soon as they'd done one or two run-throughs, he said, 'I never want to work another way again!'"

"There was always gonna be a different edge to a certain degree anyway, with the fact we have three lead guitarists [now]," Steve Harris noted in 2000. "That in itself, I would've thought wasn't going to be an easy thing to handle, but Kevin handled it brilliantly. I do think he has given us an edge because it is just working with someone new and someone who is very positive, and he has a great vibe about him. The studio is not my favourite place to be. I would rather be onstage, so to be able to say I enjoyed it is important and to work with the right people is important."

With their working methods refreshed, attention turned to the album itself. With countless ideas and half-finished songs flying around between Maiden's numerous songwriters, finding enough material for a new album was never going to be difficult. What was more potentially problematic was how the songwriting credits were going to be divided up, but any fears that the newly convened Maiden line-up would end up bickering were soon dispelled. Maybe due to simply maturing as people or because this was too good an opportunity to fuck up with ego battles, Iron Maiden were a firmly united front.

"The first thing that has to happen, and which *did* happen, was everybody was pretty cool and laidback about getting their songs on or not getting their songs on," remarked Bruce. "Everybody was aware that everybody had to have a bit of give and take. We were reading off the same script."

"People brought in different ideas and I guess Steve had the bulk of them," Kevin notes. "He really is the keystone in that organisation – every song goes through Steve, and especially back then, with the reforming of that line-up. Over the last 20 years and the last five or six albums that we've done, it's evolved a little since then, and it's become a lot more collaborative. But they needed to have that one solid anchor and that was Steve."

With their bass-playing general guiding the ship, Maiden duly conjured some of the strongest songs of their career. Listening back to *Brave New World* nearly 20 years on, you can hear the excitement in the air as Maiden bashed anthems and epics out in the Paris shadows. Armed with both short, sharp singalongs such as explosive opener *The Wicker Man* and the rampaging *The Mercenary*, plus towering, elaborate epics like *The Nomad*, the Maiden sound was receiving a subtle but significant upgrade.

GETTY

"It was a band finding their feet in the studio again, finding that natural chemistry," says Kevin. "Maiden is just *different* – you can't change Maiden. I tried to introduce new elements, like the orchestra in *Blood Brothers*, to give things a very grand feel. But you can't say, 'Look, I think gallops are passé! Let's go with something else…' because that's what Maiden *is*. They come in with a ready-built identity and you can't fuck with it. It would be irresponsible to fuck with it, for one thing, and why would you want to?"

Preceded by a single, *The Wicker Man*, that emerged three weeks prior, *Brave New World* was released on May 29, 2000. As their world tour loomed, Maiden would have been delighted to note that the album received almost universal praise from the rock and metal press,

With Adrian and Bruce back in the fold, world domination was inevitable

with only a few bemused mainstream hacks questioning the validity of this return-to-glory. Most importantly, the fans absolutely fucking loved it, sending the album into the upper echelons of charts around the world and swiftly obliterating the sales figures for previous album *Virtual XI* in the process.

The band's subsequent tour saw them return to the kind of venues and events they'd called home during their 80s heyday: Earl's Court in London, Madison Square Gardens in New York and, in January 2001, a show at Rock In Rio in Brazil, in front of 250,000 people. As comebacks go, *Brave New World* was an absolute monster. And they've barely paused for breath since.

"As Bruce has pointed out on more than one occasion, those guys pay me a lot of money, so I always want them to be as successful as they can be," states Kevin. "But success and chart placement aren't important. For me, it's been about seeing the evolution. They were a band that were really on their knees when we went into record *Brave New World*. It's great to see them out there now, with the jets flying around and the crazy stage productions… it's all just brilliant."

"Maiden is the best heavy metal band in the world," Bruce concluded, not unreasonably. "The musicianship within the band is so scarily good. People don't even realise how good the players are in Maiden. That's why it's possible for us to do it. Also, in our hearts, none of us are satisfied with second-best. We're not sad old fuckers getting back together to go and make a few bucks. If something's worth doing, you've got to do it 100%."

"YOU CAN'T TELL MAIDEN THAT GALLOPS ARE PASSÉ!"

KEVIN SHIRLEY, PRODUCER

BRAVE NEW WORLD DISSECTED

Three choice cuts from Maiden's triumphant return

THE HIT
The Wicker Man
The first thing we heard from post-millennial Maiden. A thunderous eruption of pagan positivity and communal righteousness, it wasn't directly inspired by the classic British horror movie of the same name, but it does go up like a policeman on a bonfire. It went Top 10 in the UK, and straight to Number 1 in Greece. Well done, Greece!

THE CLASSIC
Blood Brothers
On an album dominated by grandiose epics, *Blood Brothers* stood out as a singular and emotionally potent statement. Gracefully embellished with Kevin Shirley's orchestral arrangements, Steve's poignant ruminations on the state of the world and thoughts of his late father explode into a chorus that unites vast, boozy crowds like no other.

THE WILD CARD
Dream Of Mirrors
Maiden have been masters of the longform song since the beginning, but *Brave New World*'s longest song saw them flexing new creative muscles. Blessed with some of Steve Harris's most unsettling lyrics, this sprawling paean to the restless subconscious paved the way for two decades of fascinating musical evolution. The dream, as Bruce elegantly points out, is true.

> "It's heavier than we've ever been, but also very progressive. It's about war and religion. About how we never seem to learn our lessons from history"

STEVE HARRIS

Iron Maiden (left to right): Steve Harris, Janick Gers, Dave Murray, Adrian Smith, Nicko McBrain, Bruce Dickinson

WAR ALL THE TIME

Dateline 2006: the world was in pieces but *Iron Maiden* were still rolling relentlessly onwards. *Metal Hammer* talked to the generals of British metal about their 14th studio album, *A Matter Of Life And Death*.

WORDS: MALCOLM DOME PHOTOS: JOHN MCMURTRIE

It's December, 1979. In a pub lurking to trap the unwary in London's East End, a young bassist metaphorically slams down his fist – and the butterfly effect is about to take flight.

"This band will never compromise, never. We could have had a record deal a couple 0of years ago. All we needed to do was cut our hair, and play punk. My answer to everyone who suggested it was always the same: No. We won't betray our beliefs just to get a deal. In the end, it will work for us. I just know it."

The band in question: Iron Maiden. The bassist: Steve Harris. And, in that one statement of intent, he lay down a immutable truth that has resonated throughout the metal world for nearly three decades.

No other band has ever had such a single-minded passion – some might call it pig-headedness – as do Maiden, in particular Harris, who's come to be regarded as the leader of the pack. The man who had a vision in the late 1970s to emulate his heroes, and thanks to an unswerving self-belief and faith in the fans, has outstripped almost all of those whose inspiration drove the young bassist to fulfil his dreams, while many others fell at various hurdles.

Along the way, Maiden have experienced choppy waters. The sacking of Paul Di'Anno in 1981 had many wondering if Maiden could possibly survive losing their seemingly charismatic frontman. Only for Bruce Dickinson to come in, and help take the band to a new level. In 1993, Dickinson left, and Maiden – with former Wolfsbane singer Blaze Bayley in his place – seemed ill equipped to deal with the grunge assault. But again, Harris and his steeds rode through the bad times, and with Dickinson's return in 1999, have become, if anything, even more celebrated.

The fact is that, in the 21st Century, Maiden are arguably the most influential metal band of all. Notwithstanding the claims of Sabbath, Metallica and Slayer, they are the ones who seem to have provided the blueprint for the Euro power metal surge, and for the New Wave Of American Metal. It's been a remarkable transformation, from the perception of being anachronistic old crones 10 years ago, to formidable heroes of such state-of-the-art festivals as Download. Almost everything metal that you love in '06 owes its roots to Maiden. Now, that is a charm, an honour, and a responsibility.

In their lifetime, they've risen to the challenge of Judas Priest, seen off Metallica, brushed aside Korn, and now stand firm against the headrush of a new generation of wannabes...

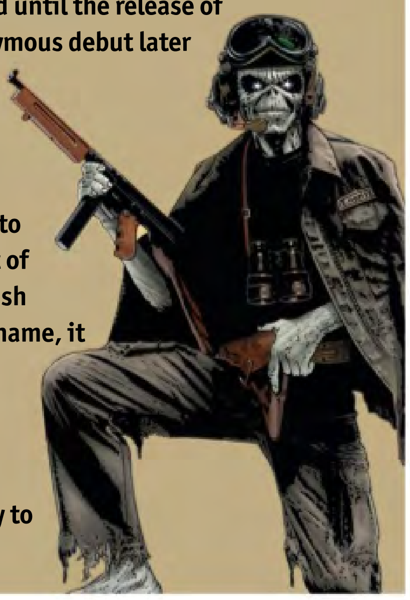
"So, where are we?"

A shrill voice cuts through the above thoughts, on Maiden's place in history. And where are we, exactly? Geographically, at Hook End Manor, which was once owned by legendary Pink Floyd guitarist David Gilmour, and is now a residential recording studio, set somewhere between Reading, Henley, Maidenhead and other such points on the Thames compass. It's so tranquil down here that it's more horticulture than whore-ticulture, if you get the drift. Maiden have

"NOT ANOTHER F**KING HAT!"

The story of Maiden's most handsome of members...

In the history of music few images are more iconic, memorable, or quintessentially fucking metal than Iron Maiden's zombie-faced mascot Eddie; also known as Edward The Great, Edward The Head, or Edward T.H. (as seen on the cover of 1985's 'Live After Death' album). Forever the centrepiece of 'Maiden's album art and a fixture of their live performances, Eddie was originally inspired by early, pre-Bruce vocalist and Kiss fan Dennis Wilcock's blood-spitting stage-antics. But the Eddie we all know and love really made his first appearance on the cover of their debut 1980 single 'Running Free' (though his delightfully shrivelled face wasn't fully revealed until the release of Iron Maiden's eponymous debut later that year).



Ironically, Derek Riggs – the artist behind Eddie – originally intended to symbolise the spirit of punk with his fiendish creation. As for his name, it comes from a joke about a kid with no body whose parents were short of gift ideas, and... just try to guess the rest.

Janick Gers: Eagle of Classic Metal

hired this location for several days, ferrying the global media in and out, to hear their outrageously strong new album, *A Matter Of Life And Death*. Today, it's the turn of *Metal Hammer*, and in the usual tradition of a band who are never less than the perfect hosts, they've laid on everything. Not just booze and a buffet, but also all manner of entertainments, from a pinball machine to a full size snooker table. Later on that evening, they screen England's World Cup game against Sweden, even ensuring a clutch of Swedish journalists are on hand to lend just the right frisson to the occasion.

But, this is about a new Maiden album – an event. For trivia fiends, it should be pointed out that it's the fourth time the band have used the word 'Death' in the title [following on from *Live After Death*, *Dance Of Death* and *Death On The Road*]. And, to many, this isn't just 'another' release from a veteran band, but something altogether crucial.

"Iron Maiden don't have anything to prove to anyone, except ourselves. But this record just feels so right, because we all pushed to our limits. We're hungry," says Steve Harris a couple of hours later. However, before we get to him and vocalist Bruce Dickinson, there's the music itself to tackle.

Most bands play back their new album on the biggest, most expensive sound system they can find. Not this lot. Having first been stripped of anything that might be used to illicitly record a note of the album – cassette recorders, mini disc players, mobile phones, iPods, gold teeth – we're ushered into the state-of-the-art surrounds, to find separate consoles. Each has a comfy chair, and a laptop, perched on a flight case. We sit at the laptop, don headphones and listen to the album through this hi-tech system. It's strange and a little disconcerting. Usually these sorts of events are a communal interchange. Glances are exchanged, a brief word is whispered as the delights of the new record are unfurled. But this... it's as if each of us is isolated from the body of the occasion; even our innermost thoughts seem removed from reality. It's an audio deprivation chamber – except that, at least, here we control the volume, although no facility exists for skipping through tracks, or even going back over them. It's a one take ride, so strap yourself in.

A Matter Of Life And Death is stunning, that much is assured as soon as it kicks in. It develops the progressive nature of the band, but is also a damn sight heavier than they've been for some while. No, let's re-phrase that last part: this is the heaviest Maiden have ever been. The album drips with ranting riffs, rampant drum fills, and the sort of maniacal rhythms that would invoke a steward's inquiry on any racecourse in the land, if a horse were caught galloping in such a fashion. It's almost priapic in its exuberance – surely unbecoming for a middle-aged band of family men.

But having just one shot at this complex album really only leaves a swirl of questions hanging pregnantly: what's driven them to deliver such stellar performances? Is this a concept album about war and religion? Is the song *These Colours Don't Run* about last year's infamous egging incident on the Ozzfest tour? And why has Harris never become involved with his beloved football team, West Ham?

"Because I'm not daft!" laughs the bassist, when asked about the Happy Hammers. "I love to go to matches, and then leave. I don't wanna deal with the politics that you'd get if you were to invest money in a football club. Finding out what happens behind the scenes destroys the myth."

Canny, yet wary, Harris is fully aware that the same also applies with bands. Maiden fans don't want everything about their heroes exposed for public ridicule and examination. There has to be mythology, and dignity.

"Our fans," sighs Harris, "they're the best in the world. Really, they are. No other band can have the same sort of devotion. We all know how lucky we are to have that global following. And the fact is that now a love of Maiden is being passed from fathers to sons. We've got kids turning up to shows now, having never seen what we're about before. And they're getting off on what they're seeing.

"That's the reason we chose to do the Ozzfest tour in America last year, and also to play in Reading and Leeds [at the Carling Weekend Festivals]. We headlined a lot of the same venues in the States as the Ozzfest two years earlier, but what that tour did was put us in front of people who'd never seen Maiden. It was a whole new audience. The same with Reading and Leeds. I'd say about 75-80 per cent of those who went to the Carling Weekend weren't fans of this band as such, they were there for the general festival vibe. But we had so many teenagers coming up afterwards amazed at how we performed, and also at the crowd reaction. I just told them, 'You think that was good? Try coming to one of our own shows!'"

Mention of Ozzfest inevitably leads to talk about the song *These Colours Don't Run*' This phrase passed into legend when Dickinson used it onstage in San Bernardino, California last August – the last night of Maiden's stint with the tour. It became infamous, because the band were pelted with eggs during their set, something openly organised and encouraged by Sharon Osbourne, Ozzy's wife/manager. It was claimed the reason behind this was that Dickinson had constantly, and publicly, slagged off Ozzfest, Ozzy and headliners Black Sabbath during the tour. This was the Osbournes' revenge.

"You'd have to ask Bruce if his motivation for the song was the Ozzfest incident," shrugs Harris. "I have to say that we'd been pelted with a lot worse by our own roadcrew during end of tour 'fun'. And I want to go on record as saying that I like bacon with my eggs! But yes, it was irritating, more because the sound was turned off during the gig as well as the egging."

But, did Harris personally apologise to Ozzy and Sharon, because of Bruce's alleged behaviour?

"No I didn't. What I actually said was that, if there was anything to apologise for, then I'd do it. But that was twisted round to make it seem like I'd said sorry – that never happened!"

"I suppose it's inevitable that people will think the song's about Sharon Osbourne," adds Dickinson. "She thinks everything's about her anyway! But it isn't. It's about men going off to war, and the fears and hopes they leave behind. In every generation, families have said goodbye to their men, who go off to fight not knowing whether they'll see them alive again. It's »

"Shut up."
"No you shut up."
"No you…"

Iron Maiden: stronger than ever

"Our fans, they're the best in the world. Really, they are. No other band can have the same sort of devotion"

STEVE HARRIS

happening now. Soldiers go to Iraq, and some come back in body bags."

"The phrase *These Colours Don't Run* fitted the mood of the song perfectly. That's all. I suppose our fans will chant along with that title for their own reasons, and I can't help that. As for the truth about the Ozzfest... so much has been written about what I did, or didn't say onstage. Did I have a go at Ozzy and Black Sabbath? No. Why would I? But I do find *The Osbournes* TV series loathsome, and the whole cult of reality TV celebrities disgusting. I hate reality TV, and I'll continue to say that, until someone jails me for it!"

While we're tackling thorny issues, let's get to the bottom of the relationship between Harris and Dickinson, one that's often been painted as, erm, uneasy. Do they really hate each other?

"Ha! That's so far from the truth. I've had one row with Bruce in the studio during all the time we've worked together," says Harris, dismissively. "Whereas I've had some real belters with Nicko [McBrain, drummer]. We've actually been virtually nose-to-nose screaming at each other – and with his nose being so flat, that's very close up! The fact is that Bruce and I have both grown up a lot, and we get along fine."

"The whole thing about Steve and me is such a comedy," concurs Dickinson. "You'd have to dig very deep to find anything. And these days we've got more in common than not."

One of the problems that's often cited is that Harris is said to run the band with a rod of steel. His word is the law – and there can be no dissent in the camp.

"I don't think that's true at all," demurs the bassist. "I know people think I'm totally hands on, but part of the reason for that was I taught myself about production, and about video editing, and I was the one in the studio overseeing everything. But that was never because I'm a control freak. If any of the others wanted to get involved with that side of things, then that wouldn't be a problem for me. The fact is, though, it's probably too late."

"You'd be amazed how much we compromise within the band on things. I don't dictate. Sure, as far as our relationship with the outside world goes, we have never compromised at all. That's because we're stubborn. But why should we? For instance, our new single, *The Reincarnation Of Benjamin Breeg*, that's over seven minutes long. And people say, 'You'll never get airplay with a song that long'. What's the difference? We don't get on mainstream radio anyway. That's what I mean. Why should we compromise when we'll still be ignored?"

In some ways, the new album is connected to *The Number Of The Beast*. When the latter hit in 1982, it was the band's third record. Now, *A Matter Of Life And Death* is the third one for the current line-up: Harris, Dickinson, McBrain, guitarists Dave Murray, Adrian Smith and Janick Gers... or is that reading far too much into the situation?

"The 'difficult' third album, eh?" smiles the singer. "Maybe there's something to that. I believe we've made a huge leap forward this time. This is our Radiohead moment! Everyone was up for pushing things as far as they'd go, but the record was so easy to make. Kevin Shirley did an amazing job as producer – so good that Steve [Harris] as a co-producer was as much hands off as hands on this time. I'm so proud of the guys' playing – it's brilliant. And I didn't do too badly for a part-time singer!"

"You know how remarkable this process was? We finished the record with two months to spare. It went so fast. We ended up paying for that extra studio time, even though we didn't need it. What a waste, eh?"

"A lot of what you hear are first time takes," reveals Harris. "Did we have to push people to get performances? No. Everyone was on the same wavelength – we all wanted to take things to a new level. It is heavier than we've ever been, but also very progressive. And I don't mean that in the modern sense, but like Dream Theater, more in a 70s way.

"Most of the songs here are about war and religion. About how we never seem to learn our lessons from history. But is it conceptual? Not in the sense of having a linking storyline."

"We're not a political band, or one that preaches," contends Dickinson. "But we do have things to say. One song, *The Legacy*, is about how we're turning this planet to cinders with all the fighting. And then we'll hand the keys to the next generation, saying: 'Here you go. Sorry it's a mess, but our side won!' Yet, I'm optimistic for the future. Global warming is now irreversible, the sea levels will rise, but humanity will find ways of adapting. We've done it before, and we'll do it again."

While the fate of mankind can't be equated with the resurgence of rock and metal in the UK, Harris is equally as positive about the state of the artform over here, after so many years in the dark.

"Bands like Funeral For A Friend, Bullet For My Valentine and Lostprophets... they're really good. I know those are Welsh bands, but to me they're British – and we should be backing them. In the 1970s, the

"If it wasn't for you meddling kids!"

NUMBERS OF THE BEAST

Just a few Iron Maiden-related numbers to ponder over...

- **They have had over 70,000,000 record sales worldwide. Not to be sniffed at...**
- **Bassist Steve Harris founded the band in 1975.**
- **They've released 14 studio albums, 9 live albums, and 4 box sets.**
- **Iron Maiden had 3 vocalists before ex-Samson belter Bruce Dickson joined: Paul Day (1975 –1976), Dennis Wilcock (1976 – 1977), and Paul Di'Anno (1978 – 1981).**
- **On January 19, 2001 Iron Maiden performed to over 250,000 people at Brazil's Rock in Rio festival – their largest crowd ever. Fittingly, they began their show at – wait for it – two minutes to midnight.**
- **Maiden sold all 5,000 copies of their debut 1979 demo, *The Soundhouse Tapes* within a few weeks of release. Not bad going for an unsigned band.**
- **The 1990 *Guinness Book of World Records* lists Iron Maiden's appearance at 1988's Monsters Of Rock as having the biggest PA system in history. It consisted of 360 speaker cabinets and took five days to assemble.**

"Did I have a go at Ozzy and Black Sabbath? No. But I do find *The Osbournes* TV series loathsome and reality TV celebs disgusting. I hate reality TV"

BRUCE DICKINSON

world looked to us for a lead, and that was such an exciting period for music. Then things turned, and it was America that got all the attention. I always felt everyone over here – and that's definitely true of the media – just became obsessed with the US, to the point where homegrown talent was ignored. We lost a lot of good bands that way. Now, it's turned again!"

All of which leads to the inevitable question just how long can Maiden keep going?

Dickinson ponders this thoughtfully. "I don't know. For at least the next five years anyway. In 2008, when we're planning to take out the *Powerslave* stage set again, I'll be 50. And I'm the baby of the band. By the time I'm 55, Nicko will be 60. And you have to ask whether we'll still want to tour. I'm not saying that we wouldn't carry on recording, but... for me, the bottom line has to be that we'll stop the moment all of us realise that we can't maintain our own high standards. To do anything else would be to compromise – and that's not the Maiden way."

Perhaps, before it's too late, there should also be a major effort launched to get the three godfathers of metal – the original Black Sabbath, Judas Priest and Maiden – on the same bill? The fact remains that, while others have been hugely important in the development of metal down the years, it all stems from these three masters.

Amazingly, Harris feels this pipedream festival isn't beyond our grasp.

"Yeah, why not? That would be amazing. I don't think it's out of the question. What I'd love to do is call it Britfest, and hold it over three days at somewhere like Donington. Each of those bands would headline one day, with a bill featuring a real mix of names – both the old and the new. What a celebration of metal that could be..."

But all talk of fantasy bills and retirement is for another day as we depart the Manor, and head into the darkness. One can't help but believe that, with 'A Matter Of Life And Death', Maiden have begun a new chapter in their already illustrious history.

The difference between greatness and success lies in the fact that the greats continue to reach greater achievements again, and again, and again. Never resting on past reputation. Almost anyone can fluke a fleeting profile, but to become giants of your chosen field – that privilege is reserved for the elite.

Maiden define the metal elite.

Iron Maiden (left to right): Steve Harris, Janick Gers, Dave Murray, Adrian Smith, Nicko McBrain, Bruce Dickinson

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WHE

Steve Harris: "We're coming for every last one of ya!"

SETLIST

Aces High
2 Minutes To Midnight
The Trooper
Revelations
Wasted Years
Can I Play With Madness
Number Of The Beast
Heaven Can Wait
Rime Of The Ancient Mariner
Powerslave
Run To The Hills
Fear Of The Dark
Iron Maiden
Moonchild
Clairvoyant
Hallowed Be Thy Name

RE EAGLES DARE

Words: Chris Ingham. Pics: John McMurtrie.

IRON MAIDEN are the greatest metal band on the planet, and 2008/2009's *Somewhere Back In Time* tour was their biggest yet. When they offered *Metal Hammer* a seat on Flight 666 as they took to the skies over Latin America, there was just one thing to do – buckle up for the flight of our lives...

We're 35,000 feet in the air over Central America and Captain Dickinson is on the intercom screaming the words to *Aces High* as the plane banks into a sickening 360˚ tailspin and downwards towards certain doom...

Well, that's been the recurring nightmare of *Hammer* since agreeing to climb aboard this latest Iron Maiden touring extravaganza. Why did they need a plane? Why did they have to load it with 12 tons of heavy metal stage gear and pyro and let the singer fly the fucker? And why the fuck did we agree to be in it?

The first two are easy to answer. Maiden are the biggest metal band on the planet. Fact. And in order to fulfill the demand for shows the band require their own transport plane to move the stage so that they can play what is effectively a stadium gig every 48 hours – a feat never even attempted by the likes of the Rolling Stones or U2, which are now the bands Maiden rank alongside in terms of worldwide ticket sales. Metallica, GN'R and AC/DC may all be giants of rock, but next to Maiden they don't even come close. And why is *Hammer* here? Because, despite the flying nerves, you'd have to grind our bones into bread before we missed out on the chance to herald their homecoming at Twickenham Stadium on July 5, 2008.

And what a show it will be. This is the one Maiden show you were born to see. The images and songs that adorn the stage backdrops are the very same ones that have come to define heavy metal itself: Spitfires, Union Jacks fluttering on the wind, Eddie in all his pharoah *Powerslave* glory, Winston Churchill's "We shall never surrender!" speech, Rolls Royce engines rumbling in the distance – it's heavy metal's finest pageantry on display. It's a show that you don't just simply turn up and see but an event you become immersed in. Need more convincing? Well, there's a giant Sphinx head from the inside sleeve of one of the greatest live albums of all time, there's a flame-throwing mummy and the occasional psychotic cyborg too. Not to mention the odd genre classic like *Aces High, 2 Minutes To Midnight, Rime Of The Ancient Mariner, Powerslave*, and surprise gems like *Heaven Can Wait, Wasted Years* and *Moonchild*. Oh yeah, then there's *Run To The Hills, Hallowed Be Thy Name* and *Number Of The Beast*. Admit it, that's one hell of setlist...

"Heh. Me and Bruce put it together right at the end of the last tour – it took 10 minutes!" laughs four-stringer Steve 'Arry Harris. "I think the only change we've made since was moving *Can I Play With Madness* to be earlier in the set."

The previous 48 hours have been a bit of a blur as we've caught flights half way round the world and met up with Maiden at the infamous Aztec temples of Mexico City, where the band were blessed in a purification ritual inside the Temple Of The Feathered Serpent before they went on to surprise even themselves and sell out a 54,000-capacity baseball stadium. Now, *Hammer* is currently sat in a front-row passenger

"I HOPE OUR FANS FEEL A SENSE OF ACCOMPLISHMENT IN SEEING WHERE MAIDEN IS NOW BECAUSE THEY'VE ALL BEEN PART OF THAT JOURNEY"

STEVE HARRIS

Rough translation: 'Iron Maiden: FUCK YEAH!'

Lighting his farts was certainly an impressive spectacle on stage, but it ruined Bruce's trousers

BRUCE DICKINSON'S FAVOURITE GIGS

RAINBOW THEATRE 1981: "My first UK gigs with the band before we recorded *Number Of The Beast*. I was thinking, 'I hope they don't hate me and if they do, fuck 'em.'"

ROCK IN RIO 1985 AND 2001: "Both of them were great for different reasons."

READING 1982: "It was a real homecoming. We felt like kings of the hill at that moment."

BRIXTON 2004: "For Clive Aid. We did *Children Of The Damned*. I love playing Brixton [Academy] – it's a really beautiful venue."

"THIS IS A BAND WITH NO FUCKING LIMITS. IF THERE'S A METAL FAN ON THE MOON WE'LL BE GOING THERE!"

BRUCE DICKINSON

If we build it, they will come...

We'll stay this side of the glass, tanks. Geddit? Tanks?!

Nicko decided to get some practice in before Bruce's copy of *Rock Band* arrived

"Do you mind if I just nip into the back and get my *Flying For Dummies* book from my bag?"

"Psst! If they all start to surf at once, we're so screwed!"

seat of a very special and hugely converted Airbus 727.

This particular plane is totally unique; it has the call sign AEU666, and has a decorated fuselage livery proudly bearing the insignia of heavy metal's first royal family, not to mention one snarling cyber-looking sonofabitch called Eddie. Welcome to the inner sanctum world of 'Ed Force One'…

"Eeeee-op! How do you like my big shiny plane thing then, Mr 'Ammer?!" gurns Maiden drummer and all-round lovable nutbag, Nicko McBrain. "Great, innit? Beats the fuckin' bus any day of the week!" He sounds like a cross between *Blackadder*'s General Melchitt and one of *Sesame Street*'s bin-dwelling puppets.

As Nicko says, a plane is, after all, a very nice way to travel between gigs. Something that even Mr Harris has surely come round to seeing?

"I was a fan of the idea from the start," corrects Steve as we turn to fly down the Mexican coast towards Costa Rica, the site of tomorrow night's gig. Without question, being aboard Ed Force One is a unique rock'n'roll ego experience, but it's also a practical working environment where a band get to recharge with minimum hassles from officious local airport types and the crew get to work like dogs every 48 hours building and stripping stadium-sized stage rigging.

"We can now go to places we've never been to before," says the bassist. "Take Costa Rica, for example. We've never played there before and we've sold 25,000 tickets. Columbia, we've sold 44,000 tickets there. Next time we come back we'll be able to look at playing Honduras, Equador, Peru and other countries we've never played before."

Like anyone who has achieved their life's ambitions and maintained a clarity of purpose and singularity of vision, Steve feels suitably proud of his band's achievements and his life's work.

"I think people understand that we're not big flash rock stars who will rub success in the fans' faces. We give a lot back, and I hope that the fans feel a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in seeing where Maiden is now because they've all been part of that journey. Having the plane and paying to tour this way enables us to fulfill our end of the bargain and get a show this size out to people who have wanted to see the band for years."

He isn't kidding. Last night *Hammer* witnessed Iron Maiden lay waste to Mexico City as 54,000 rabid Sandinistas lost the plot in the baseball stadium. That's approximately 40,000 more than the last time Maiden played there, the vast majority of whom weren't even born when *Powerslave* was last toured, which is a point not lost on the boys.

"We didn't want to just tour for the sake of making money," considers Steve, sipping on a cup of PG Tips courtesy of our in-flight service. "We wanted to bring these songs to the young fans that haven't heard them."

And it's not this big because you are in fact making this the last hurrah, as some wilder internet rumours would have us all believe?

"No, this is definitely not our last shout at all. The last studio album we did [2006's *A Matter Of Life And Death*] we all enjoyed so much that there will definitely be at least one more."

What's so odd about having conversations about the end of Iron Maiden with its founding member is that despite the years of road weariness they've each piled up, there's such a real sense of hunger in the Maiden camp it seems inconceivable to consider a finish line.

"There's certainly a strong sense of purpose about us at the moment," agrees Steve. "If I'm honest I think it's because we really don't know how long we're going to carry this on. People have to remember that we don't just stand there and play," he sighs, momentarily sounding every one of his 52 years. "An Iron Maiden show is a physically demanding gig for each of us and although we're all in pretty good nick right now I can't honestly say that I'll be able or comfortable attempting to do this in a few years' time."

Attempting to navigate away from such horrors as a Maiden-less world, *Hammer* suggests that there's a real sense of celebration about this tour too.

"This being a celebration is Bruce's take on it. For me it's a little different," counters Steve. "Our decision to play the entire new album back to back on the last tour justifies us being able to do this greatest hits idea this time around… and we did say a few years back that we were going to flip-flop between new album tours and greatest hits tours from different periods, so it shouldn't have been a surprise to anyone," adds the bassist testily.

Conversation with 'Bomber' Harris is always a little on the guarded side. Even with a beer in his hand at the hotel bar later, his chat is always measured. Steve also never forgets what you've said. That's not to say he's a killjoy – far from it – but he has found himself in innumerable situations the world over where he's been surrounded by drunken fools at all hours, so these days you can't blame him for seeking conversation in more cerebral realms. Escaping a particularly boisterous and amusingly pished Bruce later that evening, *Hammer* stumbles into Steve having a conversation about predestination, reincarnation and the inevitability (as he sees it) of life after death.

"I used to have very firm views on what I believed in, but once you have kids, it's amazing how much you start seeing yourself through their eyes. Things I believed I knew to be truths as a young man I'm now not so rash about any more." And with 'bar recall' like that, it's no wonder Steve has a natural suspicion of journalists. It's far more upmarket than Bruce's (albeit entertaining) war stories from when he toured Serbia during the conflicts and was nearly snipered.

Ah yes, it's about time Bruce Dickinson, singer, pilot, author, movie playwright and producer and all-round architect of all this plane madness made his presence felt…

"When I came up with this crazy idea of the Maiden plane I just thought it'd make a great gimmick that'd grab people by the throat, but it's succeeded beyond all my wildest dreams – it's caught on like a wildfire," laughs the ebullient vocalist.

Catch on? Jesus, that is the understatement of the tour. Channel 9 national news filmed the plane coming into land for their first Australian shows in 15 years, while the Fox Network are booked to come on board and fly with the band for a nationwide special across the USA in a week or so. Fantastico Brazil are on board in two days' time and that will screen live to six million people, not to mention the live coverage that Sky News India broadcast to some half a billion people across the Indian Sub Continent two weeks prior to this South American jaunt we're on now. Yeah, you could say that this plane thing has kinda caught the attention of the world's media. It's probably the biggest thing in the skies since Concorde.

"The media attention it generates is only part of its worth," reasons Bruce, who shares his flying duties with two other Aestrus Air pilots. "The plane is incredibly functional and it enables us to get to countries in times we could never have done before. We get to do a huge show every 48 hours and play to everyone who wants to see us. That's a great feeling."

And it also makes you look like the kings of the castle somewhat, doesn't it? Metallica might have a Lear jet but you've got a fucking great plane with 12 tons of mayhem locked in the hold.

"I'm not denying there's a vibe that says this is a band with no fucking limits. If there's a metal fan on the moon we'll be going there! It's fucking marvellous being in Iron Maiden right now. It's something that we're all feeling. You can't beat Iron Maiden right now!"

Is Maiden now at the point where you always wanted it to be?

"I now have a realisation of how big this whole thing can get for sure. But during the planning stages of this tour it never occurred to any of us that it could ever get this big. I used to wonder what we'd do when we hit that plateau that every big band hits where you're just plugging away doing a couple of nights at Wembley for the new record and another couple of nights there a year later for a greatest hits set and all that bollocks. But luckily we've avoided that completely and we've tripled the size of our audience in the last five years."

So why has that happened now?

"We've captured people's imaginations. We're playing in Costa Rica tomorrow night to a football stadium full of people when we've never released a record or done one interview there before. That tells me that Maiden is something that people worldwide just love to be part of."

At a press conference the day before, Bruce had reacted forcefully against a term used to describe the current tour as a revival in Maiden's fortunes. Bruce had been adamant that the tour should be seen as a celebration of Maiden's history and nothing more.

"I hate this 'revival' concept. You revive something that's dead. I just think that celebration is a better description of a Maiden gig. There are so many kids now enjoying what we do that weren't even born when we

THE REAL IRON MAIDENS

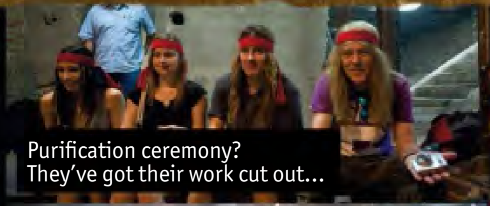
Iron Maiden are in a club watching The Iron Maidens – an all-female covers band. So, Bruce, how do you feel about the lady pretending to be you?

"It's one of those really odd existential self-analysis questions," he laughs. "Essentially, would I fuck myself? Well, the ego is willing even if the body isn't!" He then legs it out of a fire exit.

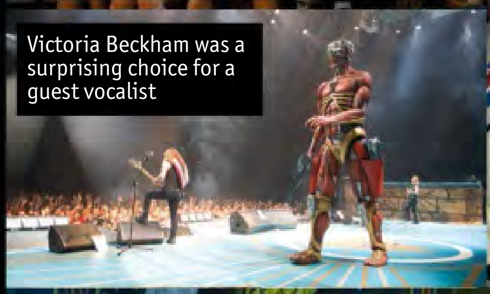
Steve is here with daughter Lauren. "They're very good, aren't they? They've even got an Eddie!" he says, pointing at a papier-mâché golem. He's also impressed by the girls' version of *Alexander The Great*, a song that even the real thing have never had the minerals to tackle live. "Not half bad," he nods. "Doesn't make me want to play it live though!"

Steve and Lauren exit, leaving only the crew and locals going mental for the metal. Later that night, the police are called. It seems someone has consumed vast quantities of ale believing it to be free when in fact the not-so-nice barman was counting every one. People are gonna be locked up and, with a tight schedule and 55,000 Maiden-mad kids to play in front of tomorrow, that simply won't do. Therefore the devilish sum of $666 is produced by a kind and unfortunate tour manager who left his phone switched on…

"These colours don't run! I use non-biological washing powder!"



Purification ceremony? They've got their work cut out...



Victoria Beckham was a surprising choice for a guest vocalist

Good. Just checking we're all on the same page...

"Scream for me! Or I let Eddie loose on ya!"

Been there, bought the wrong bloody t-shirt

BUBBLES

Aftershow drink-ups are a necessary and welcome way of winding down following the highs of an intense gig. In Maidenworld the band never hang around a venue once the show is done: it's literally down tools, walk off-stage and into a fleet of waiting cars and mini-vans. Then the entire entourage rolls out in military fashion as one and very often under police escort – all flashing lights, cops on bikes with guns etc – the full monty. All very cool. So upon landing back at the hotel, the first business at hand is a shower and a change of clothes. Then, if the body is willing, it's down to the bar to catch up with everyone else on the evening's events. And it can go on for a few hours all that 'winding down', you know. Come 3am the bar is closing and even *Hammer* thinks it might be time to say goodnight to the rogue elements of the road crew who are insisting that a night-time skinny-dip would be the appropriate course of action at this juncture. And that's when a glance at the elevator doors yields the most disconcerting of revelations: Bruce, his dignity barely covered by a pair of undies, is weaving his way in simian-like fashion from the lift to reception waving a credit card at the panicked reception staff.

"Shit! Bubbles is back!" blurts one of the crew as they rush over to help. 'Bubbles', it seems, is Bruce's alter ego when he's pissed. The eccentric Englishman in him comes right out and he just goes off and does whatever he wants. Very amusing indeed. *Hammer* pledges to "Never tell anyone. Honesh. Hic!" This time, following a bottle of heavy red and several beers, a 'tired and emotional' Bruce had retired to his chamber only to be awoken by the front desk ringing him to say that he needed to settle his bill before the morning. Instead of telling them where to go, the ever-helpful singer merely rolled out of bed, grabbed a card from the bedside table and moseyed on down to reception sans clothes to clear the matter up. We think we can safely say that wasn't the kind of prompt action the hotel staff expected.

NUMBERS OF THE BEAST

Number of months it took to ready Ed Force One: **10**
Cost of preparing Ed Force One for takeoff: **$500,000**
Weight of backline carried on Ed Force One, including guitars, mixing desks, and Eddie paraphernalia. In tons: **12**
Passenger capacity of Ed Force One: **70**
Total miles travelled during first 23 shows: **50,000.** *(That's twice around the Earth –Geography Ed)*
Ed Force One's official flight number: **AEU666**

Steve hears the news that his beloved Hammers just scored

did this last time. Iron Maiden is a cross-generational band now and... fuck me, is that Popocatépetl?" exclaims the singer, breaking off mid-sentence to point at a dramatic-looking and very much fume-belching volcano on the plane's port side. "That still looks like one angry mountain to me... er, what was I saying?"

This tour being a line in the sand, you being bigger than Metallica, U2, the Stones and Jesus all combined etc...

"Ha ha. Technically that's true, we are bigger than all of them – except Jesus. In some countries I could definitely live with this being the final thing in terms of what we've achieved with Iron Maiden but I don't want to leave it as it is because there is a lot more life left in us yet. But it is important that we stop for a little while after this and really work out how we come back from a tour this significant in order to be able to challenge people's imaginations again. I think people's expectations of us are going to be so high it'll need thinking about properly."

Now that is telling – a band understanding that something major is happening right now and already making plans to deal with the consequences down the line. It also leads into the question that most bands hate to have asked: knowing what you know now, if you had your chance to do anything differently from your past career, would you?

"No, not a single thing," comes Bruce's stock-standard response. "Well, actually... I wouldn't have recorded an album in a barn for one thing. And I should've made one of my solo albums a bit heavier too. And maybe we should have dealt with Clive [Burr, Maiden's first drummer, sacked due to 'musical differences' and a fondness for the odd shandy] a bit differently. But essentially everything we've done individually or collectively has shaped us to get to this point now so how can anyone complain?"

"When they first came up with the idea of the plane I thought they were all mad," smirks Adrian Smith, one third of Iron Maiden's sizzling 'triple axe attack', as one cornball Mexican journo described them at a press conference the previous day. "If the truth be told, I was a bit concerned about the plane because this idea of having all the crew and the band on the same schedule was something I thought impossible to do. Like, how could I stay in bed all day if I had to be on the same plane that got that smelly lot into each city to build my stage on time?" cracks the ever-dry-humoured guitarist.

And then the small matter of your singer flying the plane everywhere...

"Ah, but thankfully he isn't attempting to fly *everywhere*, is he? Bruce couldn't play a gig, have a drink afterwards 'til God-knows-what-time and then check flight charts the next morning – that'd knacker anyone. Bruce picks his moments to let his hair down..." says Adrian, as Bruce amuses himself in a frankly worrying way with a rubber airplane he's picked up from a fan. The glee with which Bruce is launching said toy to test its aerodynamics would be understandable if it wasn't for the gonzo way he cackles every time it crashes down onto the gangway of our real plane. Still, it's a good way to see different places though, isn't it, Adrian? We're desperate to take our minds off Bruce's unsettling antics.

"It would be if we had half-reasonable schedules," he quips back nonchalantly, by now immune to Bruce's wind-ups. "There just isn't enough time to see anywhere, which is a shame and the crew are fucking knackered, if I'm honest.

"The shows have been wonderful, though. It's been really excellent playing some of that old stuff again."

Does it seem weird thinking about the years between now and the last time you played *Moonchild* back in 1989? After all, you left the band following that tour...

"There isn't much I regret in terms of the decision I made," answers a deeply thoughtful Adrian. "Maybe if it were possible for me to have had a conversation with my younger self at a few crucial times then maybe I wouldn't have done certain things in terms of leaving the band. That said, I knew I needed to leave because I was burned out and I needed a break. It was seven years non-stop and I'd lost my identity for too long. I was enduring one hangover after another and surviving a gig is something you can do as a young man but you just can't as you get older. Now I'm enjoying every moment that comes my way."

Someone else enjoying every moment is Nicko and, even though he's the most senior in years of all the Maidenites, his infectious energy radiates warmth and speaks volumes of his passion for the Maiden cause.

"Sometimes I do feel that we have become living legends... that we do carry a weight of expectation from crowds worldwide. But that's OK – we love it! I'd like us to be remembered for our truth and the integrity of our music."

A handy round of Jack'n'Cokes are laid on from the Aestrus staff, the female contingent of whom are clearly being baited (make that 'stalked' in some cases) by the, er, boisterous male attentions of the tour crew. But mid-way down the plane, sat next to his old mucker Dave Murray, you will find the sandy-haired barnet of Janick Gers with his head buried firmly in a book and probably contemplating running another of his much-loved half-marathons. It seems appropriate to ask the one Maidenite who joined the band post-80s (just!) what he thinks about the songs that defined the band and his role in now bringing them all to life in this set.

"I've actually played most of them before, as part of the *Ed Hunter* tour, which we did when Bruce came back in the band [1999]" says the earnest guitarist. "We're not parodying ourselves with this setlist; we're not pretending that we're back in the 80s or anything. But it's great to be able to play some of these songs that haven't been heard in 20 years,

"Hands up who wants a Cornetto? OK, that's one, two, three, four..."

ROAD TALES

THE HAND OF GOD

Mexico – two hours on the runway waiting for a signal to leave. There's now 100 tons of Ed Force One blocking Mexicana's main garage in central America's busiest airport. Why? Someone at the airport feels that we do not have the requisite piece of paper for departure, even though we handed it over an hour before. Now they won't let us leave until someone finds it and therefore in a British fit of pique Bruce Dickinson has ordered the plane to be parked in front of the Mexican national air carrier's garage. "Now it's in someone else's best interests to get the problem fixed as well," grins Bruce. Outside, the fat man going nuts on the tarmac must, we feel, be the manager of Mexicana Airways. He's ranting at a sour-faced lady from the airport. These two lovely people have to fix the problem of lost paperwork for us. Someone on board pipes up that we could just take off, right? Bruce points out that incoming aircraft landing on our heads might be an issue and, even if we did get off the ground, militant Central American republics with F-16s at their disposal take a very dim view of rock bands breaking international conventions. We stay put. For another hour.

Maiden manager Rod Smallwood is puce with rage, threatening calls to the British Embassy, followed by BBC World News and even *The Sun*. Within minutes the plane is in contact with the local Mexican news who are telling us that we've actually left the country. Oh really? Well, what about the 100-ton blue-and-white bird with Eddie's head on the tail fin? A dead giveaway that perhaps things might not be as the airport authorities are saying, eh? The local news crew put up a chopper and images of Ed Force One on the ground are about to give Mexico City Airport an almighty headache.

As if by magic, the fat bloke appears waving a piece of paper. We can go! But what's this? In a scene straight out of *Monty Python*, the 'sour-faced bitch', as she's now known, is atop a moving stair platform which is running parallel along-side the trundling Ed Force One. She is waving Another. Piece. Of. Fucking. Paper. Faces around the plane are a mix of incredulity, hatred, glee and homicidal intent. We slow down. We stop. The stair docks with the front doors. Ivan opens the front cabin swearing in Ruskie and closes it behind him but now holding a receipt. Two and half hours late, we take off.

songs that still feel as powerful and as exciting as they did 20 years ago because that shows the vitality that this band has."

Do you feel that you've really achieved a personal moment of real satisfaction seeing the band reclaim that aura of invulnerability from that 80s' period, especially after the low points of the mid-90s with the Blaze era?

"You know what? If you're the type of people like we are then you move your goalposts. You refer to the Blaze era like it's a down period, but I can tell you, as musicians at that time we were really cooking."

Dave Murray has been quiet up until now. In fact, Dave Murray has been quiet for much of his 30-year tenure in Iron Maiden. But as the one bandmember to have been stood alongside Steve in the pubs and featured on every recording the band have ever made, Dave does have some unique perspective on the journey from pub to stadium.

"When we first started playing Costa Rica, Columbia and Puerto Rico were specks on a map to me," chuckles the soft-spoken guitarist, his trademark grin seemingly etched into his features. "We had a moment the other day looking at the plane on the tarmac at LAX Airport with a sold-out LA Forum behind us, when I think I said to him, 'It sure beats the crappy Fiat 500 we used to use to take the gear down to the Cart 'n' Horses in, doesn't it?!'"

Descending at an almighty rate, Costa Rica emerges from the primordial clouds: all rocky outcrops, misty mountains and hidden jungle-covered valleys topped off with another sodding great volcano spewing out acrid fumes. Ed Force One makes a sharp bank to the left and drops the remaining 10,000 feet in a matter of minutes. As the plane touches down there is a cheer from the road crew and our escape from Mexico is complete. Ivan the Terrible pops his head out from the cockpit to inform us that the VIPs need to be ready to move as soon as the side doors are open as there are "several hundred nutters" on the runway surrounding the plane. He ain't kidding! Either fluoro jackets and ear defenders are the in-thing for the Costa Rica fashionistas this season or every man, woman, child, dog and parrot of Costa Rica is already on the tarmac waving wildly at Ed Force One. Two mini-vans pull up and there's a knock on the cabin door. "Welcome to Costa Rica, *Aye-ron May-don*," says a beaming young official. "Please be signing this?" he enquires hopefully, waving a copy of *Number Of The Beast*. "First, we get off the plane then we be signing things!" barks Rod Smallwood, Maiden's manager.

Outside, the terminal is mental: crew kit bags and mountains of filming equipment are everywhere piled 10 high as 40 roadies are herded through customs and into a glass tunnel-come-waiting area surrounded by wide-eyed fans. Ever wondered what a goldfish feels like? Try standing in an airport terminal surrounded on three sides by a quarter-inch of glass separating you from 400 Maiden-crazy fans watching every breath, scratch and nervous bead of sweat.

Like any country starved of decent-quality rock'n'roll, Costa Rica has seized the opportunity to party and has embraced the band like national heroes. Kids have been camping outside the venue for four days.

When the band and *Hammer* arrive under police escort, having navigated a mixture of barely lit barrio back streets and super-modern state-of-the-art highways, the national stadium is reaching fever-pitch.

The show is like Mexico's – breathtaking in its delivery of the classics as each number propels the feeling of the last and takes you higher into heavy metal nirvana. Clearly the Costa Ricans feel the same way, for as Bruce remarks from the stage, "25,000 Costa Ricans make twice as much noise as 50,000 Mexicans!".

The next day, *Hammer* is setting off back to Blighty while Ed Force One marches onto the more intimidating climes of Columbia. Yet even in the soulless confines of the airport terminal, a little Iron Maiden goes a long way. *Hammer* notices a buzz building as a constant flow of people gather at one of the main windows, all pointing and making frantic grabs for cameras. Peeking over the top of the melee we can see Ed Force One lining up on the runway, engines revving and the unmistakable visage of a mummified Eddie leering back. As the plane accelerates down the tarmac, a spontaneous applause starts to echo around the terminal followed by a huge roar of approval. In a rare moment of splendid celestial co-incidence, every TV monitor in the entire airport, which is currently showing last night's news, has cut to live footage of Maiden onstage playing *Number Of The Beast* and Ed Force One's nose lifts up and into the South American skies.

'Iron Maiden's gonna get ya, no matter how far'? You can bet your arse they will come July 5...

STEVE HARRIS'S FAVOURITE GIGS

MARQUEE 1979: "The first one at the Marquee. We had a bet with Rod as to whether it'd sell out. It did."

DORTMUND 1983: "Headlining above the Scorpions, Priest, Ozzy & Leppard: it was an incredible feeling."

READING 1982: "The first one with Bruce – it was a real homecoming."

DONINGTON 1988: "It was our first time and we headlined over Kiss, David Lee Roth, Guns N' Roses, Megadeth – all great bands. It was the biggest crowd they'd ever had."

ROCK IN RIO 1985: "We played with Queen. Just a sea of people, it really felt like we were achieving something significant. It was a real spectacle and a major achievement for us."

"I've had enough of your lip, Eddie my son. Think you can do any better? Prove it!"

"What?!"

"Oh, don't mind me, guys. I didn't have time to fold my laundry before the show and I don't want it creasing"

Despite the resemblance, Pedro never filed a paternity suit against Eddie

"Damn, I had my eyes shut. Can we do that one again?"

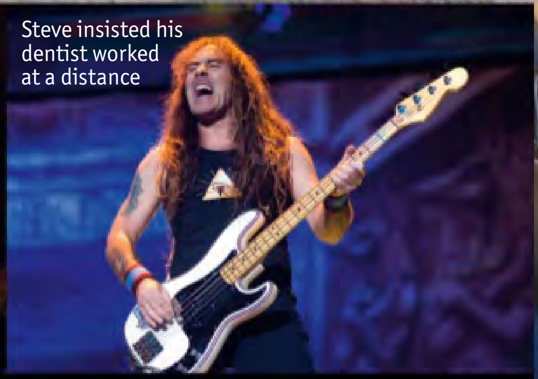
"Kumbaya, my Lord, kumbaya... Hey! Who nicked my marshmallows?"

Iron Maiden (left to right): Adrian Smith, Nicko McBrain, Bruce Dickinson, Steve Harris, Janick Gers, Dave Murray

"IT SURE BEATS THE CRAPPY FIAT 500 WE USED TO TAKE DOWN TO THE CART 'N' HORSES!"

DAVE MURRAY

Maiden have never been about subtlety



Steve insisted his dentist worked at a distance

Dave Murray soaks up the adoration

Yes, they *are* his trousers.

"Ladies and gents, fasten your seatbelts. They going to let me fly this thing!"

ROAD TALES

NICKO AND THE ANGRY INCH

"An inch from the end of the tour! A fucking inch!" blurts Nicko as he relates a tale of near-disaster following a morning's golfing and an afternoon in the local casualty department.

"How did you get injured playing golf of all things?" enquires Bruce.

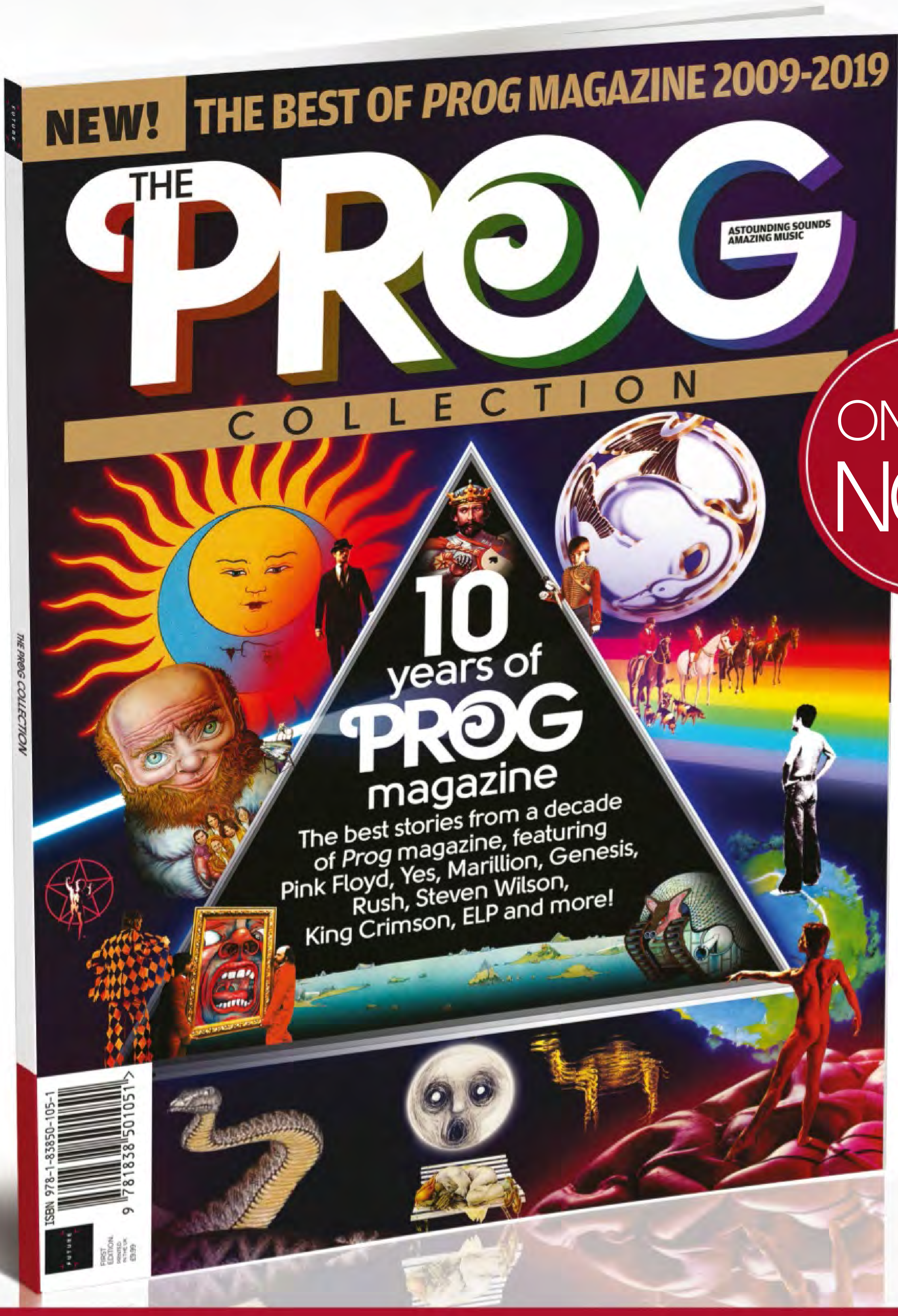
"Easy – some stupid Yank doesn't shout 'fore' on the green and he twats the fucking ball straight at you."

Said golf ball apparently hit Nicko literally one inch from his wrist bone. That's one small patch of flesh from this entire multi-million dollar roadshow being loaded in the back of Ed Force One and sent packing back to Blighty with a one-armed drummer. That. Fucking. Close. But luckily, said wristbone is intact and Nicko can put up with an orange-sized bruise on his forearm.

"The only good thing about it is that Rod wasn't there," he sighs. "God forbid what would have happened to the guy. I think there would have been a fucking murder on the spot!"

THE INCREDIBLE STORY OF PROG'S FIRST DECADE

Happy birthday to us. *Prog* magazine is 10 years old and to celebrate we've collated some of the finest features and interviews with the cream of the prog world for you to enjoy. Truly astounding sounds and amazing music.



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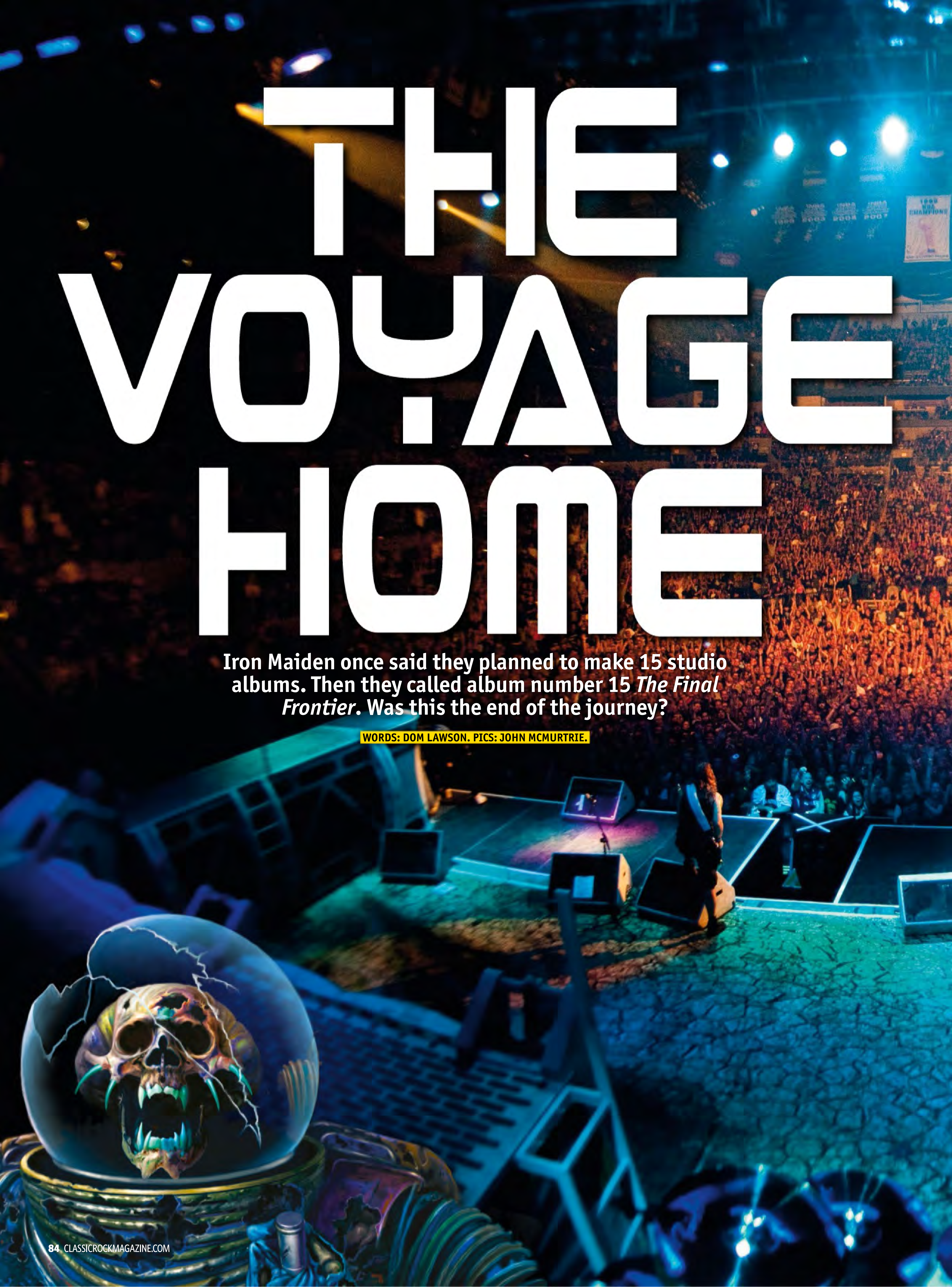
The 10s

The most epic period in a career that has never been short of drama, Maiden experienced the highs of *The Final Frontier* and *The Book Of Souls* albums and the lows of Bruce Dickinson's cancer diagnosis. But like Eddie himself, it proved that you can't kill Iron Maiden...



THE VOYAGE HOME

Iron Maiden once said they planned to make 15 studio albums. Then they called album number 15 *The Final Frontier*. Was this the end of the journey?

WORDS: DOM LAWSON. PICS: JOHN MCMURTRIE.

"PEOPLE ARE GOING TO THINK IT'S EITHER THE LAST ALBUM OR THAT WE'RE TREKKIES. IT'S NOT LIKE THAT"

STEVE HARRIS

Bruce rides his invisible hovering bicycle

Sun(set) and steel

It's a hot and sticky summer day in San Antonio, Texas. As you walk out from your air-conditioned hotel foyer into the sweltering outdoors, possibly to head down the road to The Alamo, where Ozzy Osbourne famously took a drunken piss many years ago, the effect is like being subsumed in hot custard. The natives, as you might imagine, behave as if temperatures that edge towards the 100 degrees mark are the most normal thing in the world. The British, however, are stopped in their tracks and compelled to pull stunned, slightly alarmed faces. It's seriously bastard hot here and were it not for the fact that Iron Maiden are in town and about to hit the stage at the AT&T Center, one of the city's major indoor venues, *Metal Hammer* would probably be found cowering in a jumbo-sized refrigerator somewhere, in between bottles of Mexican beer.

Janick Gers: Fender of the beast

But this is the third show of the metal titans' brand new tour; a tantalising precursor to the release of their 15th album, The Final Frontier, and every self-respecting metalhead from the surrounding area understands their solemn duty. Sixteen thousand of them are crammed into the venue and making a vast amount of noise, primed by support act Dream Theater and whipped up to fever pitch by the simple fact that there is no such thing as a half-arsed Iron Maiden gig.

In keeping with the science-fiction vibes of the new album's artwork and lyrical themes, *The Final Frontier* show kicks off with a suitably space-orientated intro and some ominous, otherworldly lighting, before guitarist Adrian Smith marches out onto the stage playing the thunderous opening riff to *The Wicker Man*, and all hell breaks reassuringly loose as the rest of Maiden storm the stage, as vital, ebullient and deafening as ever. Despite an occasionally vexed relationship with the US – the one country in the world that seemed to require a bit of persuasion to fully embrace this incarnation of Maiden, even as the rest of the world went cheerfully batshit at their every move – Maiden are welcomed back as conquering heroes over here these days. On this occasion, two years after their Flight 666 exploits and the whole *Somewhere Back In Time* tour cycle, the band are revisiting the music they have made over the last decade, since the return of Adrian and singer Bruce Dickinson helped to usher in a second golden age for this most enduring and consistently adored of metal bands. In stark contrast to the nostalgic majesty of that last round-the-world jaunt, the new Maiden set focuses primarily on songs from *Brave New World*, *Dance Of Death* and *A Matter Of Life And Death*, with just one song from the early days – the ageless *Wrathchild* – thrown in to the main body of the show, with a few old favourites appearing as welcome encores, as you may expect. Alongside the epic, bombastic likes of *Ghost Of The Navigator*, *Paschendale* and *The Reincarnation Of Benjamin Breeg*, one new song, the monstrous *El Dorado* provides a uniquely fresh highlight. Available for the last few weeks as a free download, the song is both quintessential Iron Maiden and remarkably fresh and distinct from past glories; a thrilling teaser for an album that, when you finally get to hear it, is practically guaranteed to blow your mind and put a year-long grin on your face. The fact is, 30 years after the release of their self-titled debut album, Iron Maiden look and sound a long way from a band who are winding down and eyeing retirement. Speaking with Bruce, Adrian, bassist and founder member Steve Harris and drummer Nicko McBrain after another triumphant show has ended, *Metal Hammer* gets the distinct impression that this is simply the beginning of another chapter in this band's remarkable story…

HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE BACK ON THE ROAD AGAIN AND PLAYING A SET OF SONGS FROM THE LAST DECADE, RATHER THAN FROM 20 OR 30 YEARS AGO?

Steve Harris: "It's actually a real challenge, especially starting off in the States, because the hardcore fans know the stuff but some of the other

"WE'RE NOT A CABARET ACT. WE WANT TO MOVE FORWARD"

ADRIAN SMITH

Adrian: don't call him a cabaret act

people here don't know it at all. You can tell! So it's more of a challenge, but we're enjoying it. As soon as we get to Canada and Europe it'll be very different, because they'll know the words to every song. But I think we've got to mix it up and keep challenging ourselves. The tour before last we did *A Matter Of Life And Death* and we did the whole album, so you just have to keep refreshing what you do, in front of any audience. I know people will moan that we're not playing *The Trooper* or something like that, but we played it on the last five, six, seven tours. We've never done things the easy way anyway. It's not just a question of being stubborn, it's about keeping it fresh for everybody."

IS IT MORE REWARDING TO PLAY NEWER SONGS THAN DOING THE WHOLE GREATEST HITS THING?

Bruce Dickinson: "It's really rewarding to play these songs if we can fuckin' remember them! Ha ha! But yes, it's great. I thought that *Brave New World*, looking back, was a classic album that came straight out of the box, but we haven't had that much chance to pay much attention to it. We're playing four songs from that album on this tour and they all sound completely incredible. But you can only really go by the audience reaction. Tonight was the first show where I actually found myself getting two thirds of the way through the set and thinking, 'Oh, it's almost over!' and that's when time seems to pass and you're in the zone, so that was really good…"

Nicko McBrain: "There's no real difference for me but it's great to play this stuff. It's quite weird to think of songs that are 10 years old as *recent*. I like the balance we've got between the last four records. It's fresh for us to go back and revisit. It's always hard to know what to play anyway! *Somewhere Back In Time* was a celebration of the old stuff, but this isn't about that. It's a celebration of our last few albums."

Adrian Smith: "We don't want to be a cabaret act. We could probably play Vegas for the rest of our lives, but we want to play new material and keep moving forward. These songs are quite long and we thought it might be a bit tricky for the audience, but the response has been fantastic. In fact, I don't remember the response ever being this good in America. They've just been really into it."

WHY DO YOU THINK THAT IS? THE U.S. SEEMS TO LOVE MAIDEN NOW MORE THAN EVER…

Adrian: "I noticed it when I came back into the band in '99, that there were a lot of new fans in Europe but America didn't seem to have changed. But thinking

Eddie's eyes were set to 'kill'

"'Ello 'ello 'ello, what's all this then?"

Still think you could do what Nicko does?

PANGALACTIC RIFFMASTERS

FIVE MORE SPACE-RELATED METAL CONCEPT ALBUMS.

BAL-SAGOTH

***A BLACK MOON BROODS OVER LEMURIA*, 1995**

Although they described themselves as "extreme avant- garde baroque metal", Bal-Sagoth were fantasy and sci-fi buffs to the core. Their debut introduced fans to frontman Byron Roberts' dark fantasy universe via songs with catchy titles like *Into The Silent Chambers Of The Sapphirean Throne (Sagas From The Antediluvian Scrolls)*. Over their next five albums, Bal-Sagoth would add ever more detail to their cosmic vision, culminating in the ludicrous extravagance of *The Chthonic Chronicles*, "the end of the Hexalogy", according to Byron.

NOCTURNUS

***THE KEY*, 1990**

A death metal band with a difference – they had a keyboard player, unthinkable in 1990 – Nocturnus were true sci-fi nerds and based their debut album on a story about a rogue cyborg that travels back in time to 0BC, resulting in the destruction of Christianity and a new, godless modern empire. With songs like *Andromeda Strain* and *Droid Sector*, *The Key* was aimed at fans of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*, but only those who also liked brutal metal.

GAMMA RAY

***SOMEWHERE OUT IN SPACE*, 1997**

Never afraid to embrace a ridiculous concept, German power metal mavericks Gamma Ray went the whole hog on their fifth studio album. *Somewhere Out In Space* is a gloriously nerdy affair, covering all manner of intergalactic concerns, from opening song *Beyond The Black Hole*'s tale of uncharted territory to the self-explanatory *Men, Martians And Machines* and the poignant but daft *Lost In The Future*.

VOIVOD

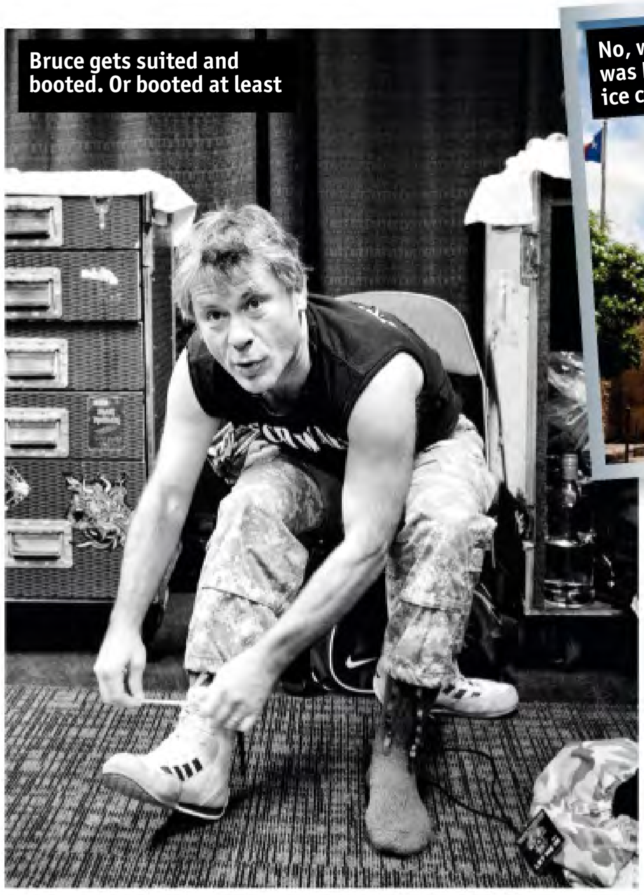
***KILLING TECHNOLOGY*, 1986**

Not so much a concept album based on sci-fi, more an embracing of the genre's whole aesthetic, *Killing Technology* separated Voivod from every other band of the thrash era by being both musically and lyrically bizarre. With brilliantly odd, futuristic artwork created by drummer Away, the album even looked like something that had been beamed down from space. Meanwhile, songs like *Forgotten In Space* invited fans into a new and distinctly dark and menacing alien world of weirdness.

DEVIN TOWNSEND

***ZILTOID THE OMNISCIENT*, 2007**

The story of an extraterrestrial being from the planet Ziltoidia 9, Devin's ninth solo record was reliably bonkers, even by his unique standards. Ziltoid arrives on Earth in search of "the ultimate cup of coffee". What happens next isn't entirely clear, but it's accompanied by plenty of Devin's futuristic metal and a whole mess of silliness. Ultimately, what's not to like about songs called *Ziltoidia Attaxx!!* and, erm, *Tall Latte*?



Bruce gets suited and booted. Or booted at least

No, we didn't believe it was Nicko's first ever ice cream either

about it, on this tour there seems to be a lot of younger fans and the response has been a lot more *European*, if you like. In Europe the response is always great and we're floating on air out there, but in America you always have to work a bit harder because the audiences, funnily enough, are a bit more laidback. In Europe and South America they just go bonkers all the time, but here they're spoilt for choice, so you have to drive it harder. But yeah, it's been fantastic and a real surprise."

WHEN BRUCE AND ADRIAN REJOINED IN 1999, DID ANY OF YOU EXPECT TO BECOME AS SUCCESSFUL AS YOU ARE RIGHT NOW?

Adrian: "There was always that strong ambition in the band. When I got involved again, I spoke to everyone and it was clear that it was going to be more of a long-term thing. I didn't think it'd be *this* long. It's 11 years now and it seems like yesterday that we came back. I'm surprised on one hand that it has gone so big again, but it was always obvious that we were going to have a real crack at it. It's worked out pretty well!"

Steve: "I never thought this far ahead. You just see how it goes and you never get a clear indication of how something's going to work long term. Bruce was out of the band for a few years and Adrian was out of the band for a few years as well, but right from the start there was no problem whatsoever, and that surprised me! I thought there'd be a few teething problems, but that didn't happen at all. You don't really want grief in your life, do you? So it's been wonderful really. I think it helps that we've made some really strong albums along the way."

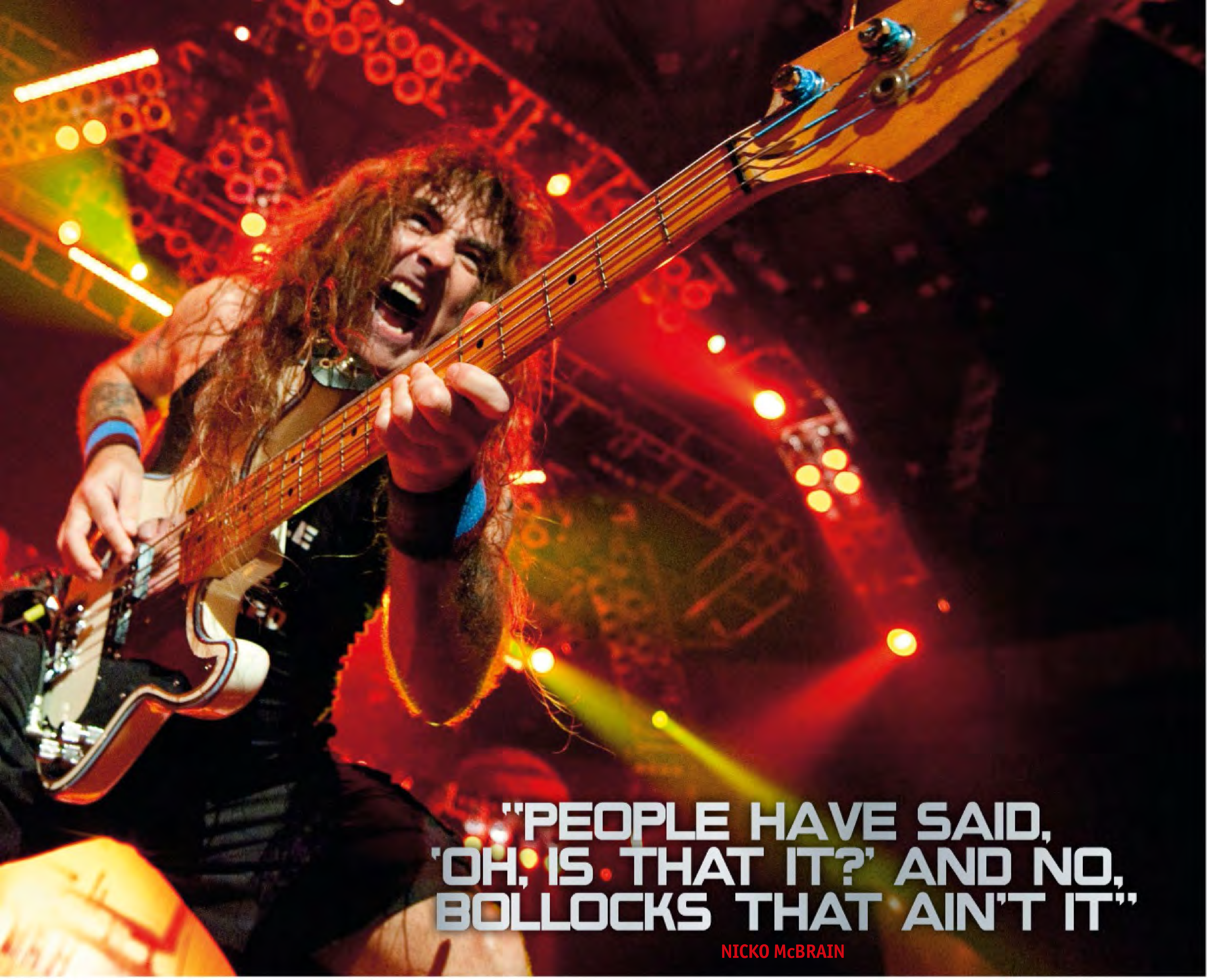
Bruce: "No, we didn't expect any of this and it's getting more silly by the day! I'm very cautious about people getting us to work too hard so that we end up going, 'We're not enjoying this any more', so whilst you don't want to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, you can make sure it doesn't lay too many and you keep things chilled, and then I think we can keep ourselves going for a lot longer."

YOU ALL GIVE THE IMPRESSION THAT YOU'RE HAVING MORE FUN THAN EVER BEFORE...

Steve: "Yeah, I think that's true. These days, in general, we're a lot happier and you can see that onstage. The first shows are always a bit edgy, as they are on any tour, but the feeling onstage is better than it's ever been – there's no reason why we can't carry on as long as we want to carry on. We're older and wiser and we don't argue about stupid things any more. Well, maybe once in a while, but it doesn't last five minutes! It's easier and a lot more amenable now. We know each other a lot better. We've always used things in a positive way. If you're feeling down or pissed off, turn it into a dark song. I did pretty much a whole album like that on *The X Factor*!"

Iron Maiden: triumphant

Life on the road is considerably easier for Iron Maiden in 2010 than it was 25 years ago, when they conquered the States for the first time. Travelling between shows on their own private jet and pacing their tours so that gigs on consecutive days are a



rarity, the band have earned the right to do things their own way and are clearly enjoying the privilege and pleasure of seeing the world in comfort. Sharing a few post-gig drinks in the bar, they will chat excitedly about their trip to NASA headquarters in Houston the other day, when the band entered the Mission Control room, perfectly preserved from the days of the original Apollo moon missions, and saw their own faces grinning back at them from the giant screens that hang on the wall in front of rows of desks and computers. After 35 years of doing this, the six members of Iron Maiden all still seem slightly surprised at how frequently they encounter fans in the unlikeliest of situations, but they also remain utterly down to Earth and philosophical about the whole thing, as if to allow a single shred of complacency or arrogance into their worldview would bring the whole thing crashing down around them. They needn't worry, of course, but it's hard to imagine certain other big metal bands exhibiting quite the same level of humility.

Everyone who cares about metal knows that Maiden are a special band; a band that transcends race, religion, culture and anything else you care to mention, and that generates a level of devotion that no other band, from any genre, comes close to matching. What is rarely acknowledged is the reality of how that has all been achieved. Without support from TV, radio, the vast majority of the press or any kind of accidental trend bearing them forwards, Maiden have become arguably the best-loved rock band in the world and the key to their ongoing success has been a combination of hard work and consistently great records. No smoke or mirrors. No bullshit. Listen to the new Maiden album, *The Final Frontier*, and you will hear a band still very much in love with their own music, enthralled by the opportunity to take their fans on yet another wild journey. From the swirling, future-metal lunacy of opening two-parter *Satellite 15/The Final Frontier* to the monstrous *El Dorado*, yank-the-heartstrings ballad *Coming Home* to the balls-out sprint of *The Alchemist* and on through a clutch of astonishing epics like *Isle Of Avalon* and apocalyptic closer *When The Wild Wind Blows*, it's simply one of the best, not to mention bravest, albums that Iron Maiden have ever made.

YOU'VE BEEN BECOMING STEADILY MORE ADVENTUROUS SINCE *BRAVE NEW WORLD*. HOW DELIBERATE HAS THAT BEEN?

Bruce: "This album is probably the greatest departure from our sound, but it's been happening incrementally since *Brave New World*. But none of it is premeditated at all. I think the key is not to make albums that often. It's not a conveyor belt. But, when you do make something really interesting like this, you feel like, 'Oh, we should make another one!' We could just be bored by it all, but we're obviously not!"

Steve: "Albums we've done over the last few years and even stuff we did before that, like *Sign Of The Cross*, those songs stand up with anything we've ever done. They're a bit different, but why would you want *The Trooper* part two? EMI tried to get us to do *Run To The Hills* part two back then – we told them where to go! What's the point in repeating old stuff? Fans will argue in the pubs 'til the cows come home about what we should be doing or whether this album is better than that one, but you can't take any notice of that. Should we send out a questionnaire or something? 'What would you like on the next album?' I don't think so! Ha ha!"

THE FIRST TRACK, *SATELLITE 15*, SOUNDS COMPLETELY UNLIKE ANYTHING YOU'VE EVER DONE BEFORE. ARE YOU DELIBERATELY MESSING WITH PEOPLE'S HEADS?

Steve: "We never have specific aims for anything and we never know what we're gonna write. We have no preconceived idea of what we're going to do. *Satellite 15* was a basic idea that Adrian had and I put it together with the words and it wasn't what he intended at all, but it sounds great! I was really excited about it, probably more than some of the other songs, purely because it was so different. It shakes things up. To still get excited like that... well, at my age, that's a great thing! Ha ha! It sounds kind of industrial to me, like film theme music, and that's great. It sets up the album great, with the title and the sci-fi feel and all that, and it does what it says on the tin! It could lend itself to being a live intro too."

Bruce: "We evoke the sci-fi thing in the song. The title of the album, I thought up 15 months ago. We hadn't written a song yet and I just thought 'We should call the next album *The Final Frontier*!' because it sort of is... It could be, but it might not be! You go to the final frontier and you're in uncharted territory. It had a certain ring to it. It means we can go back to space for an Eddie and

"AS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON, MAIDEN REPRESENT SOMETHING ASTONISHING"

BRUCE DICKINSON

The new stage set in full

things like that, and we haven't done that for a while. It has a certain romance to it."

STEVE, YOU HAVE BEEN QUOTED AS SAYING THAT YOU ALWAYS PLANNED TO MAKE 15 STUDIO ALBUMS. IS THIS REALLY THE LAST ONE OR ARE YOU BEING A BIT MISCHIEVOUS BY CALLING IT *THE FINAL FRONTIER*?
Steve: "That's true. I've always said that I wanted to do 15 studio albums. Well, I haven't *always* said that. I started saying it after the fourth or fifth album I suppose, but I didn't even expect to do more than three when we first started! But yeah, there's probably a bit of mischief there, particularly on Bruce's part, but people are going to think it's either the last album or that we're Trekkies, or both, and it's not like that really. It's just a really strong title. If that's how you want to see it then so be it, but it would be sad if we don't make another album, and sad for the fans too. We'll have to see."
Bruce: "Is it mischief? Yeah, of course it is! Ha ha ha! Because although we genuinely haven't made up our minds about another album, we thought that people are bound to say, 'Oh, it's the last album!' and so we'll just go, 'Not necessarily!' Ha ha! I don't know what we'll call the next one. Maybe 'Never Say Never'! Ha ha ha!"
Nicko: "I think everyone's being too fucking cagey! No, it ain't gonna be the last record. Not as far as I'm concerned. The general feeling is that if we want to make another record, we will. You can never say never, and my personal feeling is that we'll tour the next album and play all the new stuff, you'll get a new stage set and all that, and then we'll make another album. *The Final Frontier* just suits the vibe and the moment. People have said, 'Oh, is that it?', and no, bollocks, that ain't it. Not unless the good Lord turns round and tells one of us it's time to go!"

Janick, Dave and Adrian do their best Ozzy poses at The Alamo

We know just how you feel, mate

Bruce is still reaching for the stars

WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO GIVE THE TRACK *EL DORADO* AWAY FOR FREE?
Steve: "It's the first time we've done it, but we knew we wanted to do some gigs in the summer and we didn't want to put the album out until August, and I did question that because it was quite unusual. But we decided to play one new song on this tour and we thought that people might as well hear it beforehand. It's a thank you to the fans but we knew that itwould be on YouTube as soon as we played it, and of course it was! No matter how well we play it live, someone's going to record it on their phone, and it's not gonna sound as good, so we thought it's better to download the proper version instead. You do have to embrace new technology and what'shappening now. And it keeps people guessing about the album!"

YOU'VE ACHIEVED SO MUCH IN RECENT YEARS. WHAT ELSE IS LEFT FOR YOU TO DO? DO YOU HAVE ANY UNFULFILLED AMBITIONS?
Bruce: "There are plenty of countries we haven't played that would be great. I don't think Maiden's over yet. I think as a musical thing, but also as a social phenomenon, there are countries, Islamic countries, where Maiden represents something really quite astonishing to kids. So we do stand a chance of breaking a few barriers down, and there's lots of ways in which the band can break through. We'll have to wait and see what they are. You can't make them happen. It does seem that the universe keeps throwing us curveballs."
Steve: "When we got to India for the first time, peoplewere saying the same things they say everywhere, like, 'We grew up listening to your band!' It was amazing. There seems to be other places like that as well. So as exciting as it is to go back and play for the fans that know and love you, and it always is, there's something refreshing about going somewhere new and you can't get away from that really.That drives you on."

CAN YOU IMAGINE LIFE WITHOUT MAIDEN?
Bruce: "It's not something I ever really contemplate, to be honest with you. If Maiden stopped being active, there would still be a sort of ghost of Maiden that would haunt the corridors! I think the only way to kill that is to do something dreadful and to go out with just one original member andit doesn't bear thinking about! Without all of us, it wouldn't be Maiden. We get back together, go in a room, muck about and you think… It is like the best fitting pair of jeans youever had and you go, 'Oh, isn't it great to be back again? Everything's cool. It's all back!' The cap fits, you know?"
Nicko: "We'll rock until we drop, basically. But we won't rock if we can't cut it anymore. I still love to get up there and I can still keep my edge. If I pace myself, I can still rock it. Listen, anyone who thinks they can have my job, fucking forget it!"
Steve: "We're having a great time and we just go with the flow. We're not stopping yet, put it that way. It's nice, in the twilight years of our career, to have all this going on, tohave our own plane and all that lark. You do have to pinch yourself sometimes. I'm not saying we deserve it, but we have worked our nuts off for many, many years and anyone who's been a fan for a long time knows that and sees the effort that we put into everything we do. So we'll take it, thank you!"

CLASSIC ROCK'S DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO QUEEN

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When drummer **Clive Burr** was ousted from Iron Maiden in 1982 he thought things couldn't get much worse. Then he was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and his life turned upside-down. In 2010, three years before his death, Classic Rock spoke to the man who powered Maiden's first three albums

Words: **Lee Marlow** Photographs: **Ross Halfin**

IT STARTED FIRST of all in his hands. Of all the places, his hands – the tools of his trade. It was just a tingling sensation to begin with, nothing too much or too worrying; inconvenient rather than painful. But it wouldn't go away. And, rather than get better, it got steadily, worryingly, worse.

Clive Burr's guess about the tingling in his hands was simple: it was the drumming. Must be all the drumming he'd been doing for years that was to blame.

'Hit 'em Hard', he used to have emblazoned on his custom-made drum sticks. "And I always did," he says. "So I carried on. I shoved it to the back of my mind, tried not to think about it."

That was the end of the 80s, he thinks, 1988 or maybe '89. A long time after he'd left Iron Maiden. He'd occupied half-a-dozen bands' drum stools since Maiden.

By 1994, though, it was so bad that he couldn't carry on ignoring it. "I kept dropping things," he says. "I couldn't grip properly. I could barely keep hold of my sticks." When he could no longer twirl his sticks between his fingers – the kind of showboating little trick he was able to do with his eyes closed only a couple of years before – it was time to see a doctor.

The diagnosis took months. There were tests and examinations, more tests, until eventually it culminated in a consultant's office, a stoney-faced man, a chair and some very bad news.

It was about as bad as it gets. The tests revealed multiple sclerosis, and a particularly virulent, aggressive strain of the condition at that, called primary progressive MS. Clive Burr's life was about to change forever.

Today, the man who provided the frantic but always distinctive and highly original rhythmic backbone that ran through Iron Maiden's first three albums is in a wheelchair. Sometimes, just getting out of bed to face another new day is a struggle. "I do get tired," he says. "I can't always do what I want to do."

His drums are in the garage at his specially adapted house in Wanstead, east London, which he shares with his partner Mimi, a former Sunday-school teacher who also has MS.

"Meeeeeeeemes," he shouts, repeatedly, throughout our interview. "Where's me Rosie?" [Rosie Lee = tea] "I only get the drums out when my nephews come round now," he says. "They seem to like it." For Clive, now 53 years of age, that's as far it goes these days.

In another lock-up is a pile of damaged Paiste cymbals, broken at various gigs on the Beast On The Road tour back in 1982: a poignant reminder, if it were needed, of the powerhouse drummer he once was. His drumming days are now over.

On the rare occasion the MS does drag him down, he reaches for the DVD player and watches an old Maiden concert.

"I like that," he laughs. "I'll sit there with Meemes, with me feet up, and I'm right back there. I'm smiling all the way through it. We were a good band, you know."

Before we get to how he started with Iron

Clive Burr at home in London, December, 2010.

Maiden, and just how good they were with Clive powering them along, it's perhaps more pertinent to address how it finished. This is something that has gnawed away at Clive for the best part of 30 years. Much has been written about his split from Maiden, during an exhaustive US tour in the summer of 1982. And most of it, he says dismissively, is hogwash.

"I've heard the stories – that it was because of drugs or too much drink," he says. "It wasn't anything like that."

The truth, as it often is in cases of heavy metal musical chairs, is a bit murkier, a bit more acrimonious. It started with a phone call. He doesn't recall where he was when he got the call, he just remembers that he had to get home to London. His dad, Ronald, had died unexpectedly of a heart attack. He was just 57 years old.

A US road map dotted with gigs lay in front of Maiden, but at that moment it didn't matter, he says. "I had to get home."

Everyone seemed fine with that, he remembers. Go home, they said. Be with your family. Clive flew back to London on Concorde.

Maiden brought in former Trust drummer Nicko McBrain as a replacement so the tour could continue, the show could go on. Clive and Nicko were mates. No worries. Everything was cool.

"I knew Nicko," Clive says. Nice bloke. Good drummer. At a number of earlier shows, Nicko had dressed up as Eddie to terrorise the crowd. "He loved the band, he loved being part of it all. And the rest of the band liked him." Clive was about to find out just how much.

So Clive flew home, went to his father's funeral, spent some time with his family, and two weeks later flew back to the States to join up with Maiden, who were criss-crossing America supporting Rainbow, Scorpions, .38 Special and Judas Priest.

"I got back and I could tell something wasn't right," Clive recalls.

There was a meeting. The atmosphere was tense. There was change in the air, and Clive, still numb from the loss of his dad, could smell it.

"We think it's time for a break," they told Clive. And that was that. After the best part of four years, three albums – not just any old albums, either, but the three albums that many Iron Maiden fan will tell you remain the band's best work – and suddenly the dream was over, just as it was all coming true.

Everybody knows what happened next for Maiden.

What happened next for Clive Burr was a case of dusting himself down and starting all over again.

He was grieving for his dad. Now he was also grieving for his band and the job he'd dreamt of since he first saw Ian Paice playing *Highway Star* with Deep Purple.

Back home in the UK the rumours were rife: it was the drugs that were to blame for his dismissal; it was the drink; that Clive liked the beer, sex and rock'n'roll just a little bit more than the others; that sometimes he had to play shows with a bucket by the side of his drum stool for when those hangovers became just a little bit too much… The rock'n'roll high jinks were getting in the way of the band, everyone agreed. Everyone except Clive.

Thirty years on, he says it still smarts to hear it. He was never a big drinker. Sure, he'd have a brandy and Coke – a Courvoisier and Coke, "my roadie used to get it for me before we went on," he laughs – but nothing too debauched. No more or less than anyone else in the band.

"We were like schoolkids in America," he says. "We'd never been there before and it opened our eyes. There was a lot of parties, and girls were throwing themselves at us. We'd never experienced anything like it."

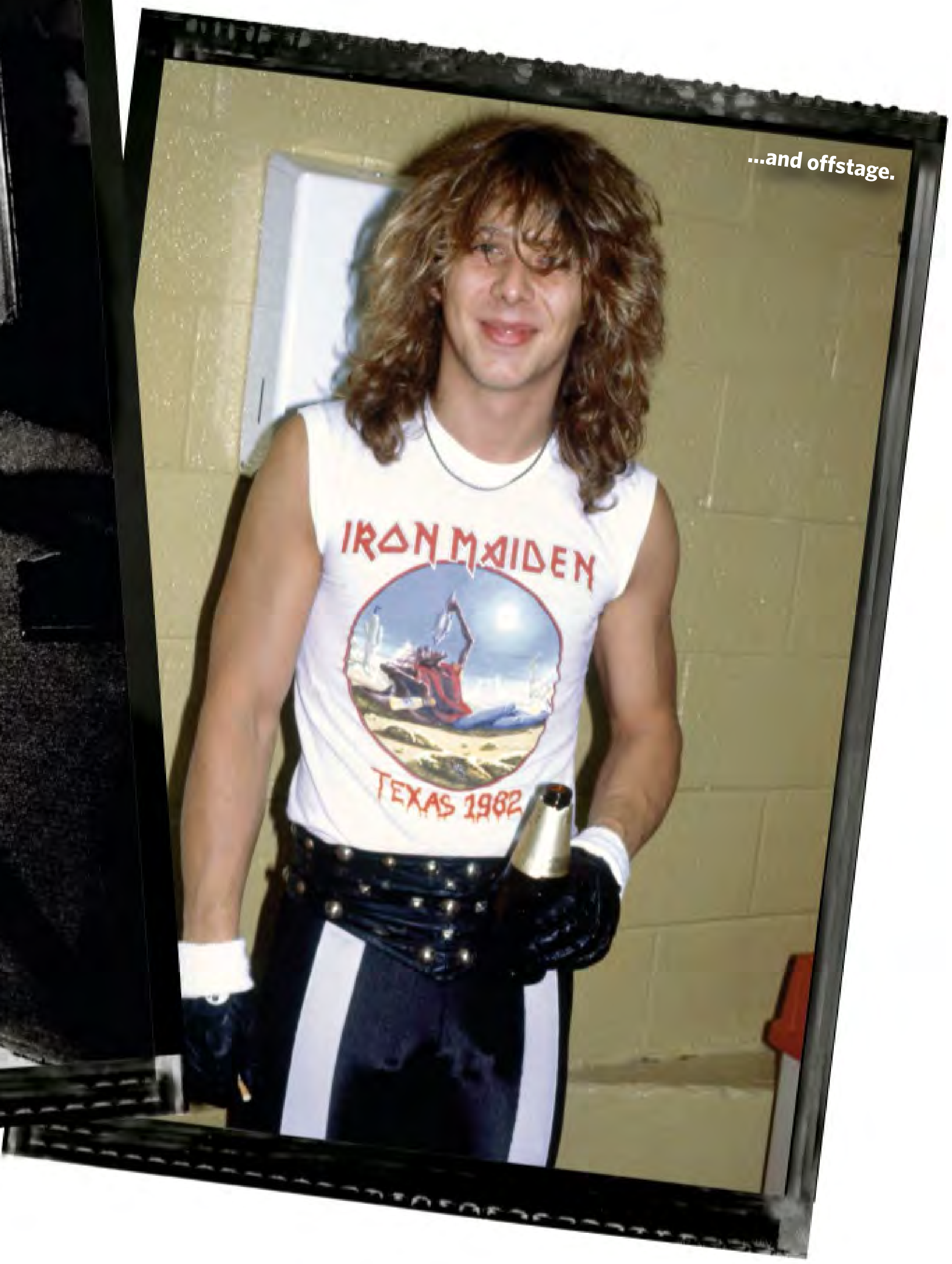
Clive – the lad who had been voted teen magazine *Oh Boy*'s Hunk Of The Month in July 1980 – lapped it up. "Of course I did. We all did."

And then it was gone.

Clive flew back to London again, then on to Germany with his mum, and laid low.

"I was too upset to feel angry about it," he says. "There was a grieving period – I grieved for my dad

"We were a good band": Clive Burr with Maiden onstage…



…and offstage.

Powerhouse: Clive used to have 'Hit 'em Hard' emblazoned on his drum sticks

"My abiding memory of Number Of The Beast is Steve telling me to slow down."

and I grieved for my band – and then I brushed myself down and got on with it."

Just like that?

"Pretty much, yeah. There was no real bitterness. Life's too short.

"It's good to set the record straight, to tell my side of the story," he says, "because it's not widely known. I think if you're going to sack someone, sacking them after they've just lost their father is not the best time to do it… I guess they had their reasons. So that was that."

After Maiden, Clive played with a number of bands in fairly quick succession: Graham Bonnet's Alcatrazz (that lasted a week), Trust (Nicko's old band), Stratus, so-called NWOBHM supergroup Gogmagog, Elxir, Dee Snider's Desperados. None of them would come close to matching what he achieved with Maiden. And yet for Clive it didn't matter.

"I just wanted to play. When I came home from Germany after Maiden, I used to put my hair in a hat, put some dark glasses on and play with anyone who'd have me, in the pubs around London," he laughs. "I just wanted to drum."

It was what he was like as a kid. The Burrs lived in a council flat in Manor Park, the heart of London's East End. While at school Clive built himself a makeshift drum kit. "Everything we had around the house, he was hitting it with sticks," his mum Klara remembers.

When he discovered Ian Paice and Deep Purple, his obsession seemed to take on a new dimension. Klara's family bought Clive his first drum kit when he was 15. It was both a blessing and a curse. "It was okay for them, they didn't have to hear it," says Klara. "I used to go out of the flat afraid to look the neighbours in the eye because of the noise he used to make."

Even to Klara's untrained ears, she could tell he was good. Really good. He never had a formal lesson, he learned by watching other drummers and practising constantly.

Clive joined Maiden from Samson in 1979, replacing Doug Sampson, just as Maiden were about to sign to the giant EMI Records. It was a huge step up in class, he remembers, from Samson's more traditional blues-based rock. Maiden rehearsals were serious, and they had to be. The songs were faster and trickier, with lots of time changes. Playing drums with this band was no job for a novice.

More – and better – gigs started to come along, and so did interest in the band from record companies. As EMI wooed Maiden, Clive jacked in his day job as a runner in the City.

The band's success was nearly all down to Steve Harris, Clive says. "Steve was the leader. He wrote the songs, he booked the gigs, he sorted out rehearsals. He was very single-minded. He knew where he wanted it all to go. And we all followed."

The rhythm section on those first three albums was as tight as the band's spandex.

"It wasn't always like that, though," Clive remembers. "Steve used to say I played the songs too fast, he was always telling me to slow down. My abiding memory of recording *The Number Of The Beast* album is Steve telling me to slow down."

There were odd spats, he says, but nothing major, nothing serious. "We got on well, and there was a lot of camaraderie." Even after the split, Clive would meet up with Maiden guitarist Adrian Smith and go fishing.

When the band found out about Clive's multiple sclerosis they stepped in and helped they best way they knew how – by playing for him. Their help has transformed his life.

"They bought me a vehicle…" He pauses. "Meeeeeeeemes, what car is it again?" he shouts. "We call it the Clivemobile. It's a Volkswagen Caddy with blacked-out windows. It's like an American gangster's car. They've put concerts on to raise money, not just for me but for other people with MS. They put a stair-lift in our house. Sometimes I'll go up and down the stairs, looking at the gold and platinum records on the stairwell. Ha ha."

Better than that, and what he appreciates most of all, Mimi says when Clive is out of earshot, is that they involve him. "They say if ever you need anything, just ring, just call," she says. "Whenever they play in London, Clive knows that he's only got to pick up the phone and he's got two of the best tickets in the house. It might not sound like much, but it is to Clive. Finally, to him, it's like his achievements – who he is and what he did – are being recognised."

HOPE AND GLORY

From East End pubs to worldwide stadiums, Transit vans to private jets, via sackings, internal squabbles and brand new business models. In 2011, *Classic Rock* sat down with the three "control freaks" who steered **Iron Maiden** to world domination...

EARLY JUNE, 1979. At a pub named The Swan, close to the famous Hammersmith Odeon, Iron Maiden, a young heavy metal band from the East End of London, were due on stage. But there was a problem. Their singer had just been led away in handcuffs to the local police station.

Paul Di'Anno had been arrested for possession of an offensive weapon – a flick-knife found by police when they frisked the singer during a random stop-and-search outside the pub. Di'Anno, a classic Cockney wide boy, was good at talking himself out of trouble. But on this occasion he was out of luck.

At The Swan, the band's bassist Steve Harris nervously broke the news to the man who had booked the gig. Rod Smallwood – at 29, six years older than Harris – had been looking for a way out of the music business following spells as an artist manager and booking agent, but having heard an Iron Maiden demo tape, passed on to him by a friend who worked with Harris, Smallwood had sensed potential. He'd booked two gigs for the band. The first – at The Windsor Castle on Harrow Road – ended in farce when the band, not realising the prospective manager was there, refused to play to a near-empty pub until 30 or so fans and friends travelling from the East End arrived, leading to an argument with the landlord who told them he would get them barred from North London. The second gig was at The Swan.

When Smallwood heard that Di'Anno had been nicked, he turned to Harris and told him, "You've got to play – your fans are here on time for you." Harris hesitated, but Smallwood pressed him. "Do you know the words?" "Yeah," Harris replied, "I wrote 'em." "Can you sing?" "Not really." "Can you try?" "Yeah, sure."

Ten minutes later, Iron Maiden got up on The Swan's tiny stage. They played as a trio: Harris, guitarist Dave Murray and drummer Doug Sampson. At this point in the band's career, they still hadn't settled on a permanent second guitar player to partner Murray, but even with only one guitarist and with Harris singing, Maiden's performance got a great reaction from the pub crowd. As Harris recalls, "When you're up against it, you just have to go for it. There were some things I couldn't physically play and sing at the same time. But it fired me up. Things like that bring out the best in you."

> **"I always wanted to be a manager. I envisaged a band like Zeppelin, playing fields all over the world."**
> Rod Smallwood, Iron Maiden manager

For Rod Smallwood, this was the moment when he first believed that Iron Maiden could go all the way to the top. "Steve couldn't sing," Smallwood laughs now, "but I'd never seen anybody like him on stage. It was the way he and Davey looked the audience in the eye. I loved the attitude. It sounds silly or easy to say looking back, but after that one gig I knew they'd be fucking huge – plus they were playing songs like *Prowler, Iron Maiden, Phantom Of The Opera* and *Wrathchild!*"

Fewer than 50 people saw Iron Maiden at The Swan, but it was the most significant gig the band has ever played. Most importantly, it bonded Harris, the band's leader, with Smallwood, the man who would become their manager. This was the beginning of a long and close relationship that would propel Iron Maiden to superstardom. But what was also significant on that night at The Swan was the arrest of Paul Di'Anno. The band had laughed off the incident when the singer returned to the pub after the show, having been released pending a fine. But here was a portent of trouble to come. When Iron Maiden achieved their greatest success, they would do so with a different singer.

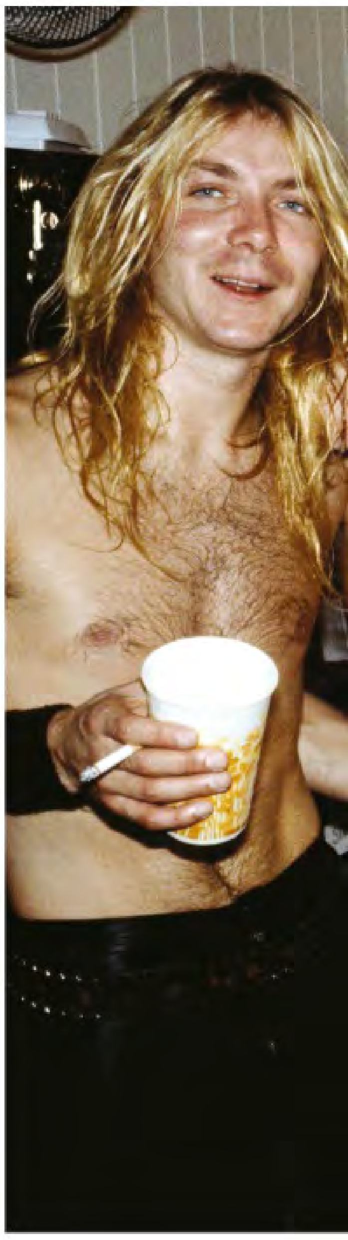
THE STORY of Iron Maiden is a classic three-act drama: rise, fall, and resurrection. And at the centre of that story is the man who replaced Paul Di'Anno in 1981, Bruce Dickinson.

It was the single-minded vision of Steve Harris that would make Iron Maiden the greatest metal band of its generation, and it was Rod Smallwood's belief in that vision – soon to be allied to his partner Andy Taylors's keen business acumen – that would develop Maiden into a global franchise. But it was Bruce Dickinson whose powerful voice and energetic showmanship transformed Maiden into a truly world class band; it was Dickinson's exit in 1993 that precipitated the band's decline; and it was his return in 1999 that completed their comeback.

In the 30 years since Bruce Dickinson first joined Iron Maiden, it is these three "control freaks," as Smallwood calls them, that have defined the band's history: Harris, the no-nonsense, working class Cockney; Smallwood, the brash Yorkshireman; Dickinson, the opinionated, multi-talented over-achiever. Iron Maiden always was and always will be Steve Harris's band, even if Harris himself would never say it explicitly. It was Harris who formed the band on Christmas Day, 1975, and he has led them ever since, writing the bulk of the band's songs. But in Rod Smallwood, Harris found a manager as influential and hands-on as Led Zeppelin's Peter Grant. And in Bruce Dickinson he found not just a foil but also an equal, a self-confessed "awkward customer" with his own, strongly expressed, views on what Iron Maiden should and should not be.

Iron men: mascot Eddie and the three "control freaks" who've shaped Maiden (clockwise from top right): Steve Harris, Bruce Dickinson and manager Rod Smallwood

A 'revitalised' Bruce in 1988, on his way to Monsters Of Rock.



ROSS HALFIN; INSET: GETTY

There would be conflict within Iron Maiden: most famously, a rivalry between Harris and Dickinson, which has only really been settled since the singer's return to the group. But what united them is a common goal, a determination to make Iron Maiden the biggest and best heavy metal band in the world.

Beginning with *The Number Of The Beast* in 1982 – the band's first album with Dickinson, and their first UK number one – Iron Maiden became the most successful metal act of the 80s. They did it the old-fashioned way, the hard way, via a series of marathon world tours, with minimal media support beyond a few specialist rock magazines and radio shows. And they succeeded without selling out. Maiden had hit singles, a dozen reaching the UK top 20 in the 80s alone, but their music was never radio-friendly by design. They were signed to major label EMI, but they retained absolute artistic control. And it was this fiercely independent approach to the music business, as much as the music itself, that made Iron Maiden an inspiration to bands such as Metallica, whose drummer Lars Ulrich stated unequivocally: "Maiden was our one true role model."

As Harris says: "We always stuck at what we believed in. I'm proud of that."

STEVE HARRIS is an atypical rock star. Unassuming, never flash, he plays down what Rod Smallwood says of the hierarchy in Iron Maiden. "I wouldn't say I'm a control freak," Harris says. "I just like to get things done."

But while he dislikes the term that Smallwood applies to the band's modus operandi, "a non-democratic democracy", he admits: "I know what Rod means. A lot of the time, we've done stuff mainly between me and him." And discussing his role as Iron Maiden's leader, his logic is simple: "I think with any band, you need one person to really take the bull by the horns. Most people don't want to do the grunt work, but I took it upon myself to do it all right from the start."

In the early days, Harris managed Iron Maiden and booked their gigs. He poached Dave Murray and Paul Di'Anno from rival bands. He wrote or co-wrote all of the band's early material, and utilised his skill as an architectural draughtsman to design the band's logo. What Rod Smallwood offered Harris and Iron Maiden was greater music industry experience, key contacts, and perhaps most important of all, fierce commitment. As Smallwood says: "Steve found someone whose work-rate and belief was equal to his own."

Smallwood had big dreams. "I always wanted to be a manager," he says. "I envisaged a band like Zeppelin, playing in great big fields all over the world." And in Steve Harris, he saw his Jimmy Page, a born leader with genuine talent and absolute conviction. "With a band, not everyone wants to lead," Smallwood explains. "But Steve was unquestionably the leader of the band and everybody else was happy with that. Before I came along it was all Steve, it was all his determination and energy and integrity. But Steve is 100 per cent music. He doesn't want to deal with a record company. When I came in, it was my job to put a barbed wire fence around him to let him do what he wanted."

Such was the bond between them that Smallwood was only officially contracted as Iron Maiden manager after he had brokered the band's record deal with EMI on November 12, 1979. There was no clamour to sign Iron Maiden: CBS passed on the band, believing the songs were not strong enough. Nevertheless, Smallwood was able to secure a lengthy contract with EMI that proved hugely beneficial to a young band that needed time to build a career. "It was crucial," he says, "that we insisted on a three-album deal. But EMI would only give us £50,000 for three albums, plus recording costs. And we needed to buy equipment. We needed to tour. So I took a £35,000 advance on the first album, £15,000 on the second, and nothing on the third. The aim was always to renegotiate that deal after three albums."

Paul Di'Anno, Dave Murray, Adrian Smith in 1980.

Smallwood had briefly co-managed another EMI act, Steve Harley And Cockney Rebel, for a couple of years and a long-forgotten art-rock band named Gloria Mundi that was signed to RCA. But his business partner Andy Taylor, a friend from Cambridge University, was a shrewd accountant, and Smallwood had a keen sense of strategy. From the outset, he had a global vision and long game plan for Maiden. "Metal is a worldwide phenomenon," he says. "So we actually looked at developing the whole planet in parallel."

Smallwood also understood that in the short term, both he and the band would have to live "hand to mouth", a trade-off worth making for a three-album deal. "No-one took anything out. We were all on what we needed to live, nothing more."

When the band recorded *The Number Of The Beast* the members were still only on wages of £60 a week.

"Me and Rod really subsidised a lot of things," says Harris. "I wrote all the songs, pretty much, and I didn't take a penny from it. And Rod didn't take any commission. That shows commitment. It's like any business – we had no guarantee that we were going to get any sort of money out of it. But it was never about the money. We just wanted to be a big band."

To this end, Harris would have to be ruthless. Before the first Iron Maiden album was recorded, the band acquired a new guitarist, Dennis Stratton, and a new drummer, Clive Burr, replacing the less accomplished Doug Sampson. For Harris, firing Sampson was necessary but difficult.

"I had some sleepless nights over it," he admits. "And for a while I was called Sgt. Major Harris, or

The Line-Up Of The Beast: ***Number*'s line-up, with Clive Burr, right.**

ROSS HALFIN

the Ayatollah. But I did what I had to do."

The album – titled simply *Iron Maiden*, and recorded for just £12,000 – was a critical and commercial success. Harris would never be happy with the album's production, by Will Malone, but the raw sound was perfectly suited to the band's aggressive style, with Di'Anno's snarling voice giving Maiden a tough, streetwise edge.

Released on April 14, 1980, the *Iron Maiden* album reached number four on the UK chart and went on to sell 350,000 copies worldwide. "Those were significant sales for a debut album," says Smallwood. And this strengthened Maiden's hand with EMI. "If you're showing success internationally from the word go, they know not to interfere."

Moreover, the image on the cover of Maiden's first album gave the band a strong visual identity, effectively a trademark, which would be exploited throughout their career. The monstrous figure on that cover, painted by artist Derek Riggs and named Eddie after the crude skull stage prop that had been used in the band's early shows, became Iron Maiden's figurehead. "The band didn't have a Mick Jagger," Smallwood says. "We needed a symbol, and that was Eddie." The power of Eddie as a marketing tool – plus Harris' readily identifiable logo –established Maiden's merchandising as a key revenue stream. And nobody appreciated this more than Kiss, the band whose theatrical image and marketing savvy made rock merchandising into an industry in the 1970s.

When Maiden supported Kiss on a European tour in August 1980, Kiss bassist Gene Simmons told Smallwood he loved Eddie and predicted: "Iron Maiden is going to take over from Kiss as the biggest merchandising band in America."

"Maiden immediately struck me as a band with huge potential," says Simmons today. "The band was both musical and powerful: a rare combination. And being the Capitalist Pig that I am, Eddie struck me as an iconic visual that would buy everyone in the band big houses."

Smallwood adds: "We had strong merchandising from the word go. If we hadn't, we couldn't have toured the way we did."

Second album *Killers* was released in February 1981, and featured another new guitarist, Adrian Smith. Stratton had been ousted: according to Smallwood, "because Dennis liked The Eagles and wore red strides and the floppy white top. Sadly he just wasn't very metal…" *Killers* cost a little more than the first album – a still moderate £16,000 – but sold 750,000 units worldwide, including 150,000 in the USA. However, during the *Killers* tour in May, gigs in Germany were cancelled after Paul Di'Anno lost his voice. According to Harris: "Paul was totally fucked up."

Di'Anno had always played fast and loose, but the band had no room for passengers. Touring was key to Maiden's development, and as Di'Anno himself conceded, his rock'n'roll lifestyle was making him unreliable. "It wasn't just that I was snorting a bit of coke," Di'Anno revealed. "I was going for it non-stop, 24 hours a day, every day. I thought that's what you were supposed to do when you were in a big rock band. I knew that I'd never last the whole tour."

It was a test of Harris' leadership and Smallwood's management. The search for a new singer began.

THE FIRST time Bruce Dickinson saw Iron Maiden play live was May 8, 1979 at the Music Machine club in Camden, where Maiden were the second act on a bill kicked off by Angel Witch and headlined by Samson, the band Dickinson later fronted. (The review of that gig, written by Geoff Barton and

NUMBERS OF THE BEAST

MAIDEN IN FIGURES

66 the number of days from February to April this year that Maiden took to travel 50,000 miles and play 27 shows in 25 cities in 12 countries across 5 continents.

95,000 total miles travelled on the Final Frontier Tour

98 total number of shows played (it would have been 101, but for two cancelled shows in Tokyo)

43 number of singles

2,000,000 number of fans played to on Frontier tour.

28 number of countries in which *The Final Frontier* went to No.1, including Brazil, Bulgaria, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Iceland, India, Japan, Mexico, New Zealand, Arabia, Slovenia, Lebanon and the UK

80,000,000 number of albums sold

17 number of UK top 10 singles

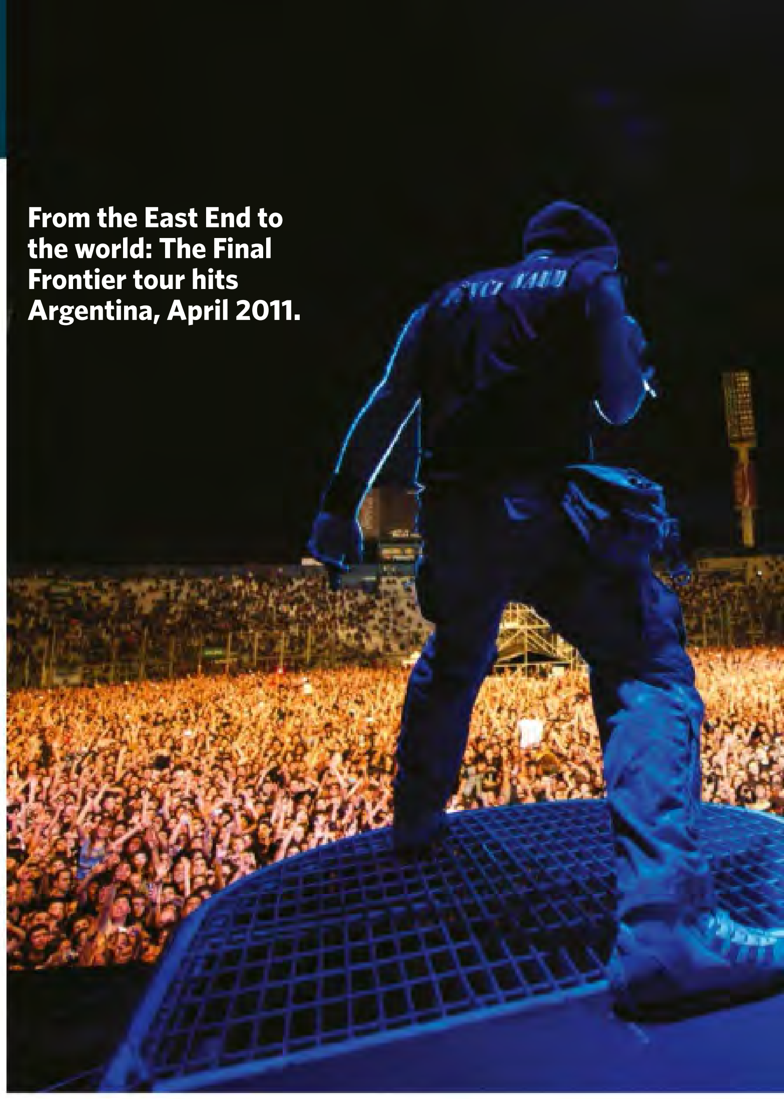
26 number of official Iron Maiden albums, including 15 studio albums, 6 live albums, and 5 compilations.

4 number of Iron Maiden albums to have gone to No.1 in the UK: *The Number Of The Beast* (1982), *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son* (1988), *Fear Of The Dark* (1992) and *The Final Frontier* (2010)

20 number of world tours since signing with EMI in 1980, playing over 2,000 shows on every continent (with the exception of Antarctica)

GETTY

Singer No.3: the Blaze Bayley years. "We just got on with the job."



From the East End to the world: The Final Frontier tour hits Argentina, April 2011.

JOHN MCMURTRIE

published a week later in *Sounds*, was the first time that the phrase 'New Wave Of British Heavy Metal' was used.) As he watched Maiden from the back of the hall, Dickinson was convinced that this band was destined to become one of the biggest in the world. He also believed that he, and not Paul Di'Anno, should be Iron Maiden's singer.

"It was blindingly obvious," he says, "that Maiden were going to be massive. This hyper-kinetic band, it was really a force of nature. Paul Di'Anno, he was OK, but I thought, 'I could really do something with that band!'"

Dickinson didn't have to wait long for his chance. In the summer of 1981, he was approached by Iron Maiden behind Di'Anno's back. Dickinson claims he "felt sorry" for Di'Anno, but he also sensed that Samson's career was stalling. The band's 1980 album *Head On* had reached the UK top 40, but the follow-up *Shock Tactics*, released in May 1981, had not even charted. On August 29, Dickinson met Harris and Smallwood backstage at the Reading Festival after Samson had played. A few days later he went into the studio with Harris and laid down some vocals on a couple of key Maiden tracks so see how they sounded. He was a perfect fit. Maiden had two Swedish shows lined up in September (Dickinson: "It must have been like having bad sex with the missus and then having a great shag with somebody else and then going back to the missus") and after these Di'Anno met with Smallwood and was dismissed. The very next day Dickinson became part of Iron Maiden, changing back to his real name Bruce Dickinson (rather than the 'Bruce Bruce' of Samson).

Rod Smallwood says of Di'Anno: "He couldn't handle the success. It was never much fun telling people they weren't in the band anymore, but you don't change singer at that point if there's any doubt. Of course we'd prevail – the band was so good." At the time, however, Steve Harris wasn't so sure. Dickinson was technically a better singer, but Di'Anno was a hero to Maiden fans. "We knew Bruce was good," Harris says, "but he was very different to Paul, so you're thinking, 'Are people going to accept this? Well, they'll have to!'"

Bruce Dickinson was officially announced as Iron Maiden's new singer in early October 1981, and made his UK debut with the band at London's Rainbow theatre in November 15 following five 'bedding-in' shows in Italy in late October. The singer's authoritative performance silenced the calls from Di'Anno loyalists and allayed any lingering fears in Harris. But for Dickinson, joining Iron Maiden left him heavily in debt.

He and the other members of Samson had signed a contract with the band's management company with a buy-out clause of £250,000. "It was a ludicrous sum," Dickinson says. "We'd only ever had about 30 quid a week out of the band. But we were bonkers, completely out of our gourds, and we'd signed the document."

Smallwood disputes the figure of £250,000, dismissing Dickinson's arithmetic by laughing, "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing!" But it was Smallwood and Dickinson's negotiating skill that resulted in a final settlement of £30,000, paid by Sanctuary Management on the understanding it would be repaid later.

> **"Steve was shouting: 'I want him gone! I can't stand him!' Rod said: 'He's not going. Get used to it.'"**
> Dickinson on his first serious disagreement with Harris

It was still a lot of money, a daunting amount for the then 23 year-old. But Dickinson had never lacked confidence. He'd always believed that Iron Maiden, with him, would sell millions of records. And this was an opinion shared by the band's producer, Martin Birch. During the recording of Iron Maiden's third album, *The Number Of The Beast*, Birch told them, "This is going to be a big, big album. This is going to transform your career."

In February 1982, six weeks before the album's release, the single *Run To The Hills* entered the UK top 10. But on March 16, when Maiden's Beast On The Road tour reached Newcastle City Hall, came the first serious argument between Harris and Dickinson. Prior to that evening's gig, the band had been at the venue for 12 hours, shooting a video for the new album's title track. "We hadn't had much sleep," Dickinson says, "and we were all full of piss and vinegar." In a scene worthy of *This Is Spinal Tap*, a row developed between Harris and Dickinson over the singer's microphone stand. According to Dickinson, "Steve kept standing at the front of the stage in the middle, sticking his chin right in my face while I was singing. And I thought, 'I'm the singer, I stand at the front of the stage in the middle! When I'm not singing, you can stand there. But when I'm singing, I fucking stand there!' I put extra long legs on my microphone stand so he would trip over them, and he went fucking spare!"

Harris now plays down the incident: "It might have put my nose out of joint for five minutes," he admits," but then I thought to myself, 'That's bloody good, it's exactly the attitude you want from a frontman'." But as Bruce remembers it: "Steve was shouting, 'I want him fucking gone, I can't stand him!' And Rod, to be fair, said: 'He's not fucking going! So get used it.' And then we all calmed down." Both men laugh about this story now, but this was the beginning of an intense rivalry between them. "Yes, it was Steve's band," Dickinson says. "But I had my own ideas. And I did warn everybody about it before I joined."

However, if Dickinson was a pain in the arse, it was for Harris a price worth paying. *The Number Of The Beast* represented a huge leap forward for Iron Maiden. On songs like *Run To The Hills, Children Of The Damned, 22 Acacia Avenue, Hallowed Be Thy Name* and the title track, Iron Maiden finally sounded as Steve Harris had always envisaged. In April 1982, *The Number Of The Beast* hit No.1 in the UK.

The album had been recorded in just four weeks at a cost of £28,000. "We had no record company advance whatsoever," Smallwood reiterates. "So EMI's total investment in that album was 28 grand, and in the first six months it sold 1.5 million." As Dickinson recalls, "What happened with *The Number Of The Beast* was beyond all our wildest dreams." On the day the album went to No.1, the band went to the Marquee to celebrate, where Harris had to ask Smallwood for extra cash to buy drinks for their friends. Only then did he increase their wages to £100 a week.

The band didn't need much money. They were

ROSS HALFIN

Steve Harris: "14 year olds must think we look like bloody Gandalf".

on tour until the end of that year, living out of hotels, subsisting on tour catering. But when they returned home at Christmas, they received their first big paycheck. During the summer Andy Taylor rejoined Smallwood to oversee Sanctuary and band's business affairs. He and Smallwood had effectively become business partners at Trinity, Cambridge in 1969, Smallwood taking care of the creative side and Taylor the business. With the original three-album contract with EMI expired, Taylor soon secured a much improved deal with future advance royalties and royalty percentages based on the very healthy sales of *The Number Of The Beast*. "We were always careful that we were set up properly financially," says Taylor. "You get a big cheque, but at that point income tax was 60 per cent." Smallwood finally claimed his commission. "The band," he says, "owed me a lot of money when we renegotiated." All of the band members bought houses. Dickinson put down a 50 per cent deposit on a place in Chiswick and cleared his debt to Sanctuary. But after a few days at home, Dickinson's mood had taken an unexpected turn.

"To be honest, I was actually quite depressed," he says. "I was in a great band, I've got a number one album, I've just done a world tour… What do I do with the rest of my life?"

Steve Harris felt quite the opposite. "I never thought, 'Oh well, we're at the top, this is it'. I wanted more and more."

AS IRON Maiden's popularity rose via a series of hit albums, so Smallwood and Taylor started building a music industry empire on their proceeds. In 1984, Sanctuary began managing other artists – first W.A.S.P., later Helloween and Skin – and expanded into other areas of the music business with booking agency Fair Warning (with agent John Jackson), business management, licensing, merchandise and Platinum Travel. As Smallwood: puts it: "Andy Taylor later invented the '360-degree' business model, effectively creating the mould used by the music industry today. This was the start."

Iron Maiden was the engine that drove the expansion of the Sanctuary Group. But the band's success created its own problems. Their working schedule was punishing. As Smallwood now reflects: "We did an album every year and a world tour. Fuck knows how we did it!" And it was after the aptly named World Slavery Tour – comprising 192 dates, begun in August 1984 and ending in July 1985 – that an exhausted Bruce Dickinson again succumbed to depression. "I came very close to quitting," he says.

Steve Harris remembers that tour as tough, and especially so on Dickinson. "Two hours of Maiden five nights a week for 12 months – that's enough to put anyone in the funny farm! And Bruce, because he was singing, was completely fried." But it was only when the band began writing for their 1986 album *Somewhere In Time* that Harris realized just how much that tour had taken out of the singer. "The stuff Bruce was coming up with wasn't us at all," Harris says. "He was away with the fairies, really." None of Dickinson's songs would be included on the album. "I did feel slapped down," Dickinson admits. "I thought, 'Well, I'll take my paycheck and just do a good job singing'. But I wasn't happy. I needed more. I wanted to be creating."

Another day, another stadium

With the following album, 1988's *Seventh Son Of A Seventh Son*, Dickinson had far greater input, co-writing four songs. He recalls: "When Steve said he had an idea for a concept album I went, 'Yeah!' It was brilliant. We were back and firing on all six – kerpow!" Revitalised, Dickinson then recorded a solo album, *Tattooed Millionaire*, featuring former Gillan guitarist Janick Gers, who would subsequently join Iron Maiden in place of Adrian Smith. He also had his first novel published in 1990: a comic caper, *The Adventures Of Lord Iffy Boatrace*, but he denies that he was losing interest in Iron Maiden at that stage. On the contrary, he claims that he alone sensed that the band's next album, *No Prayer For The Dying*, was lazily executed. "We had a laugh making that album," he says, "but I had this needling feeling: 'Shouldn't we be taking this just a bit more seriously?'"

Ironically, the least serious track on that album was Dickinson's own *Bring Your Daughter… To The Slaughter*, which gave Maiden a No.1 hit in January 1991. The follow-up album, *Fear Of The Dark*, also topped the UK chart in 1992. But in an era when grunge was threatening rock's old guard, and when Metallica were redefining metal with 'The Black Album', Dickinson felt that Maiden had lost their edge. "I thought we should be a bit more dangerous," he says.

Dickinson found an outlet for his frustrations in making a second solo album. "It was about needing a challenge. But as I tried to make that album I wasn't quite sure what I wanted to do." He was at a crossroads. "I wasn't happy with the idea of being a cog in a successful, well-oiled machine. My life was like Groundhog Day, albeit gold-plated Groundhog Day. And I realised that the only way I'd find out whether or not I was any good was if I stepped outside my comfort zone. And the only way I could do that was by leaving the band."

THE SINGER exited Iron Maiden on August 28, 1993, at the end of a European tour. Rod Smallwood, with typical bravado, now puts a positive spin on Dickinson's departure. "When he told me I didn't argue that much. It was good for us. It refocused things. Metal was heading towards another downturn with the advent of grunge, ➜

From fear to here: "We still have the odd argument, but we're older and wiser".

and all the hair bands on MTV had given real metal a bad name." Steve Harris remembers it differently. "It was a real downer when Bruce left. But then the attitude was: 'Bollocks – we'll pick ourselves up and get on with it'. That's all you can do."

Dickinson's replacement was Blaze Bayley, formerly of British metal band Wolfsbane. For Bayley, joining Iron Maiden was a godsend: he was broke, and Wolfsbane had struggled since being dropped by Rick Rubin's Def American label. But in truth, Bayley was never cut out for a big-league band such as Maiden. A great frontman, and a hugely likeable personality, Bayley just didn't have the range to sing the classic Maiden material. And the two albums he recorded with the band – *The X Factor* in 1995, and *Virtual XI* in 1998 – are the weakest in the Maiden catalogue.

In Dickinson's absence, Iron Maiden endured a long lean period. Smallwood concedes: "People were looking elsewhere. Nirvana and Pearl Jam were in. We just got on with the job." Harris claims, "We still did really well, fantastically well in the circumstances." But this is really his pride talking. With Blaze Bayley, Iron Maiden went into a steep decline.

In contrast, the Sanctuary Group was thriving. Taylor's '360-degree' model had captured the City's imagination, leading to a full listing of the entire group on the London Stock Exchange in 1998. After the sale, Taylor and Smallwood each owned 20 per cent of the firm. Taylor was named Chairman and CEO dealing with the City, and Smallwood was head of music management.

But Iron Maiden remained Smallwood's priority, and in late 1998, with the band's career stagnating, he delivered an ultimatum to Steve Harris. "At the end of the day, Blaze wasn't what was required for Iron Maiden," Smallwood says. "If you build a legend like Maiden, you've got to keep it a legend. It's my job as manager to make sure everything's the best it can be in every possible way. And in the end, Steve accepted that."

Smallwood and Harris recall that discussion differently. According to Smallwood, Harris was at first resistant to the idea of bringing Dickinson back into the band. "Steve's a very strong character and he takes things personally," Smallwood says. "He needed time to think about that."

After all, Dickinson had walked out on Iron Maiden and left the other band members feeling betrayed. Nicko McBrain, the drummer who replaced Clive Burr in Maiden in 1983, noted on Dickinson's departure: "He's said, 'Fuck you, I'm off'. If that ain't shitting on you, then what the fuck is?" But after five long, hard years with Blaze Bayley, the simple truth remained: Iron Maiden needed Bruce Dickinson. And he needed Iron Maiden.

Since 1994, when he released *Balls To Picasso*, the album he'd begun while still in Iron Maiden, Dickinson's solo career had been prolific but unspectacular. "I had what you could call a global cottage industry," he says. "I'd sold a few hundred thousand albums. I could have carried on, made a living out of it. But when I started getting smoke signals from the Maiden camp, my guitar player Roy Z said, 'The world needs you back with Iron Maiden.' And I said, 'By God, Z, you're right!'"

Blaze Bayley was summoned to Smallwood's office. He recalled: "I was told my services were no longer required." Bayley remains diplomatic. "I have no bad feelings about it. I liked Iron Maiden before I was in the band, and I still like them now."

FOR BRUCE Dickinson to rejoin Iron Maiden in 1998, Steve Harris had to be persuaded that he and the singer could reconcile their differences. Says Smallwood: "You cannot convince Steve of anything he's unhappy with."

Smallwood chaired a meeting at his home in Brighton, attended by Harris, Murray, Gers, McBrain and Dickinson. As the latter recalls, "Steve was very defensive at first. 'Why are you doing this?' I said, 'Because we could make a bloody great comeback album that knocks people's socks off, and I know we can do that.'" Harris was cautious. "I didn't want him coming back and just going through the motions," he says. "But my gut instinct was that it was the right thing to do." Tellingly, he adds: "Bruce was really irreplaceable." Says Smallwood: "Sense prevailed."

It was the shortest meeting of Iron Maiden's entire career. Three minutes in total, then off to the local boozer, where it was agreed that Adrian Smith would also rejoin the band in a new three-guitar line-up. Maiden toured in 1999, to bigger audiences than in the previous four years, and in 2000 came *Brave New World*, which went gold in eight countries, by far outselling *The X-Factor* and *Virtual XI*. Iron Maiden's career was reignited.

But a couple of years after *Dance Of Death's* 2003 release, the Sanctuary Group was running into problems. Matthew Knowles, father of Beyoncé and manager of Destiny's Child/Beyoncé, was made an executive of Sanctuary Records following the purchase of his management company. But when albums by Urban acts like De La Soul and D-12 were delayed, the parent company incurred heavy losses. US expansion was difficult and costly.

Rod: "Most parts of the company did extremely well – the Agency and Merchandising were thriving and the management group oversaw the careers of some of the biggest acts on the planet at the time [Elton John, The Who, Beyonce, Guns N' Roses, Slipknot, Robert Plant, James Blunt] and Sanctuary Records UK via Rough Trade had signed new acts like The Strokes, The Libertines and Arcade Fire. The acquisition of Castle [and other labels brought] a huge catalogue of classic rock and reggae. The trouble is, when you're a public company, if you have a bad period – which we did in America with sales diminishing against expectations – we had to issue a profit warning. And once you get a profit warning, all your competitors are saying, 'You can't do a deal with them because you never know if they're going to be here tomorrow'. So it's tough to do new deals."

Taylor refutes the notion that Sanctuary over-expanded. "With a PLC, you've got to expand because the City expects to see growth. And we were unlucky – things hit at a bad time in the US."

Bruce: "The tragedy was that in actual fact the ideas that they had were 100 per cent correct. I hate to use this business jargon, but their 360-degree model was absolutely the right thing to do. You can't rely on record sales anymore to sustain a band. So if you're signing a band, you have to be able to use everything at your disposal – including live, merchandising, everything. The idea of Sanctuary was that it contained all of that."

Trading losses and write-offs in 2005 led to a major restructuring of the Sanctuary Group. By the end of 2006, Smallwood and Taylor had left the company, both men subsequently forming a new company, Phantom Music, with the intention of managing only Maiden. Rod says: "My priority before and during the time Sanctuary was a public company was always Maiden."

IN 2011, Iron Maiden remains one of the biggest rock acts in the world. The band's career sales now top 80 million. But record sales are no longer the major revenue stream – it is as a touring band, with a huge merchandising range, that Iron Maiden remains profitable. As Rod Smallwood says, "With the huge decline in record sales globally, it's ticket sales and merch which form the major part of most bands' incomes."

Both partners are still as hands-on as ever. "Everything that comes out of Iron Maiden goes across either Andy's or my desk one way or another," he says. "This includes the various legal actions against copyright infringement – *ie* bootlegging. Andy registered the band's trademarks and copyrights – especially the logo and Eddie – and at any one time he has got close to 100 actions going. It's zero tolerance, really. We're not having people fucking the band over and flogging inferior products to our fans."

According to Smallwood, Iron Maiden's future is undecided beyond touring commitments till the end of 2011. Steve Harris says Maiden will continue "as long as possible, as long as we're still cutting it". He was always determined, he says, that Iron Maiden should finish their career at the top.

Steve Harris and Bruce Dickinson have learned to live with each other for the greater good. "We still have had the odd argument," Harris says, "but people grow up. We're wiser." And recent Maiden tours have borne this out. After a show in Sofia, Bulgaria in June 2007, Harris and Dickinson remained in a hotel bar for hours with this writer, drunkenly and happily reminiscing about 70s rock and, in particular, one of their favourite albums, *Rainbow Rising*. As Harris says now: "With Bruce being in and out of the band, I think he appreciates it now more than ever. Maybe we all do. And while we feel like this, we'll carry on."

Having turned 55 in March 2011, Harris concedes, "Age ain't on our side. I remember being 12 or 13 and thinking that sixth formers with beards looked really old. And I think to myself, what do 14 year-old kids think of us now? They must think we look like bloody Gandalf! But it doesn't matter – not unless you're in the first 10 rows! We've had a fantastic life and career. If it stopped tomorrow, I'd die with a smile on my face."

"You can't rely on record sales to sustain a band anymore, you need tickets, merch, everything…"

Dickinson on how Sanctuary invented the '360˚ model'

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

As they celebrated their 40th anniversary, **Iron Maiden** were in candid mood as they sat down with *Classic Rock*. On the agenda: Bruce Dickinson's cancer battle, their momentous new album, *The Book Of Souls*, and what the future holds – if there *is* a future.

Words: **Paul Elliott**
Portraits: **John McMurtrie**

Nobody had seen it coming. At the end of 2014, just a few weeks before Christmas, the six members of Iron Maiden should have been celebrating. In Paris, they had just finished recording a new album, *The Book Of Souls*. The consensus within the group was that this album would be one of the best they had ever made. It was also going to be a first for Maiden: a double studio album. And for its grand finale, it had the longest and most ambitious track this band has ever recorded, an 18-minute epic named *Empire Of The Clouds*, written by singer Bruce Dickinson.

It was while mixing the album in Paris that Steve Harris said something strangely prophetic. Harris, the founder, bassist and leader of Iron Maiden, was with guitarist Adrian Smith. It was just the two of them in the studio. Harris turned to Smith and said: "If this was our last album, it would be a good one to go out on."

It was only a few days later that Harris received a call from the band's manager Rod Smallwood. He was told that Dickinson had been diagnosed with cancer of the head and neck. Only after the initial sense of shock and disbelief had subsided did Harris remember what he had said in Paris. "I was scared," he says now. "I mean, Christ, it was really scary for Bruce, obviously, but there were implications for all of us. First, you had to think about how Bruce was feeling. But for the rest of us it was like, well, is this it then?"

It's exactly 40 years since Steve Harris formed Iron Maiden in the East End of London, and in all those years, it is he and Dickinson who have been the dominant figures in the group. It's Harris's vision that defined the band, and it's his leadership that has driven them on to huge success, and kept the group together through good times and bad. Equally, it's with Dickinson that the band have reached their greatest heights: in his first tenure, from 1981 to 1993, and following his return to the band in 1999.

The two men have had their battles: Harris the working-class hero with a quiet authority, Dickinson the outspoken former public schoolboy. The split, when it came in '93, was acrimonious, and in Dickinson's absence, the band struggled during the ensuing years when Blaze Bayley was their singer. But when both parties bowed to the inevitable in 1999 – Dickinson rejoining Iron Maiden, along with Adrian Smith – it led to a comeback that was astonishing for the scale of the band's renewed popularity, and for how long it has continued. This late-career renaissance has rolled on for 15 years, completely untroubled, until Dickinson received his diagnosis.

News of his condition was only made public in May, after he had been given the all-clear following a course of chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment. His full recovery was confirmed on August 25 with the announcement that Iron Maiden will embark on a world tour in 2016, on which the singer, a qualified airline pilot, will be flying the band's chartered Boeing 747, a role he first undertook in 2008 on the Somewhere Back In Time tour. For Bruce Dickinson and Iron Maiden, it marks the end of a period in which nothing was certain. ▷

INSET: ROSS HALFIN

“When it happened with Bruce, I started to think, ‘Oh my God, this could be it.’”

STEVE HARRIS

It is four weeks before the announcement of Iron Maiden's 2016 tour that Steve Harris speaks to *Classic Rock*. It is a warm evening in Bristol, and Harris is at the Bierkeller, one of the city's many small venues. Here, the entertainment mostly involves tribute acts or oompah bands and the aroma of stale beer permeates the place. "Nice here, innit?" he says.

For the bassist, it's a place that evokes memories of the band's early tours in the late 1970s. What brings him here today is a tour with British Lion, his other band, which he operates during his downtime from Maiden.

Over the following eight days, all six members of Iron Maiden will be interviewed separately: Bruce Dickinson in London, the others calling from their homes in the UK, Florida and Hawaii. Harris chooses a quiet place to talk, away from the noise in the Bierkeller. The tour bus in which British Lion are travelling offers a degree of luxury in contrast to the venues in which they're playing, a luxury Harris can easily afford. For all that he is, a rock star and multi-millionaire, he has no airs and graces about him. He's dressed down in T-shirt and shorts. His East End accent hasn't softened, nor the straightforward manner in which he talks.

There's only one discernible difference between Steve Harris now and in past interviews. For a man who has never been easily given to speaking of his personal life and emotions, Harris is now more open, less guarded. This comes, in part at least, from his experiences in the past year: not just the fear that Bruce might not make it, but also the realisation that the future of his band had to a great extent been taken out of his hands.

Steve Harris and a smoking Eddie at the Rainbow.

THIS PAGE: ROSS HALFIN; INSET: GETTY

Can you describe the moment when you were told that Bruce had cancer?
It was such a shock. It was a shock to him, a shock to everybody.

You feared not only for Bruce but also for the future of the band. Did you think it might be the end?
There was the realisation that it might be. It was very depressing all round.

How soon did you contact Bruce?
I left him alone for a while. I sent him a couple of texts wishing him well, but I waited until he wanted to speak to me. He started the treatment very quickly, so I wasn't going to call him asking how he is. I thought he probably wouldn't be able to talk anyway. I just sent him a text saying, "Call me when you're ready." And eventually he did.

Was that a difficult conversation?
I was surprised, because his voice sounded the same as ever. He wasn't groggy. But he told me he'd been through the hoop with the treatment. It was tough for him to talk about it.

And now, after Bruce's treatment has proven successful, what's next?
Hopefully I'm not talking out of turn, but the biggest problem now is that his mucus membranes are really dried up. From what I've read, I don't think they come back a hundred per cent. But knowing Bruce, I wouldn't bet against it.

When did he start singing again?
The last time I spoke to him, he told me he hadn't been singing, but I know he was telling me porkies. Someone told me he'd been singing, and that it sounded okay. We don't want him to run before he can walk, and Bruce will be very impatient to get back to where he was, but he's not daft. That's why we're not touring this year. He needs time to recuperate.

Would Iron Maiden have committed to another tour even if Bruce had not fully recovered his voice?
It's about whether the fans would accept it, and I think they would because Bruce, even at seventy per cent, is still better than most people out there anyway. That's how I feel about it.

Is that your decision, or his?
It's totally his decision. I can't tell him he's got to get himself in shape and do a bloody tour!

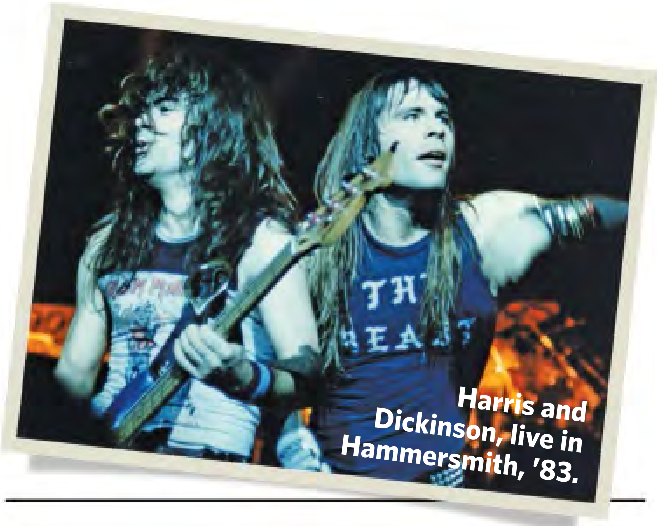
The orders of Führer Harris?
That's probably what certain people think I'm going to do! [Laughs] But it's not my decision to make. Maybe you can ask him that question because I haven't spoken to him for about three or four weeks, and that's a long time when you're recuperating.

You and Bruce have had a difficult relationship in the past. In the 80s and early 90s there was an intense rivalry between you and him.
There were a few… debates, let's put it like that. Since he came back, there's been nothing that I can think of. He's a lot more easy-going these days, and so am I. At least I like to think so.

Everybody changes over time.
It's something you learn. I'm not all peace and love now, but you mellow out as you get older.

Has Bruce's ordeal brought the two of you closer?
It doesn't take something like that for us to be close. Our relationship has been great for years. But yeah, I think we'll be even tighter after this.

When you were in conflict, how did you manage that situation? Did you simply ignore the problem?
The stiff upper lip, yeah. You get the hump for a few hours and you go quiet. That hasn't happened for a long time. But it's a weird thing, being in a band. You're together for long periods of time and then you don't see each other for ages. Maybe that's what has kept this band together, because we all live in different parts of the world.



Harris and Dickinson, live in Hammersmith, '83.

"I considered breaking up the band after Bruce left the first time."

STEVE HARRIS

Steve Harris: Iron Maiden's driving force.

You've led Iron Maiden for 40 years now. Do you remember the exact moment when you realised: this is everything I ever dreamed of?
I've felt it several times. The first was when we sold out The Marquee in 1978. When we did *Running Free* on *Top Of The Pops*, that was a big thing for a metal band at the time. The most recent was when we had our own plane on the Flight 666 tour. I said, "Fuck me, it's like being in Led Zeppelin!" But I never lose sight of reality.

As the leader of the band, what's the hardest decision you've ever had to make?
When someone has to be told they're not in the band any more. That's the toughest thing. Especially when you like people – that makes it even harder.

In all these years, have you ever seriously considered breaking up the band?
I did after Bruce left the first time. I sulked for two hours, then picked myself off the floor and thought, "No, fuck this. This is a challenge – I'm going to keep this together." But it was tough, because at the time I was going through a divorce, so I was already at a low ebb. I thought: "The rest of the guys will look to me for strength now, and I'm not sure I have it." But I found something from somewhere.

Was that the lowest you've ever felt in your life?
Everybody has tough times. You just have to get through these things. I'm not the only one to go through a divorce. Bruce did, Nicko did. And obviously there's what Bruce has just been through. But that's what makes you stronger.

You mean as a band as well as individually?
Yeah. We've known when to give people space, or when to help them out if they want it. Some people want to talk about things and some people don't. You just have to learn how that is. It's something you learn together. ▷

Dave Murray: Maiden's ever-reliable guitarist.

Maiden with vocalist Paul Di'Anno (centre).

"Sometimes personalities can get in the way. There are clashes in any band."

DAVE MURRAY

All of your adult life has been consumed by Iron Maiden. Can you imagine your life without it?
Not really. I've always liked to think that maybe I'd be able to take it on the chin, but when that happened with Bruce, I started to think, "Oh my God, this really could be it." It wasn't a nice feeling.

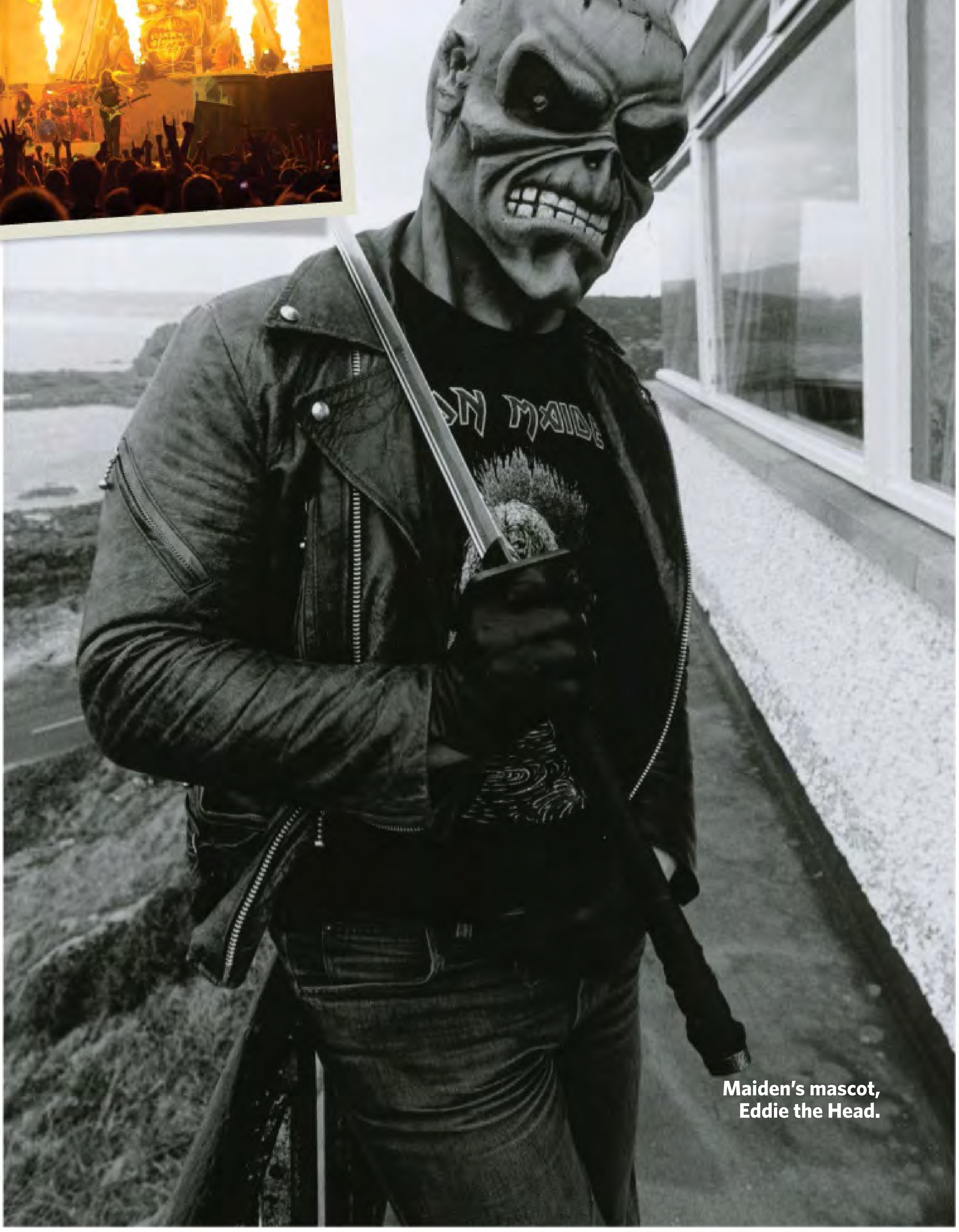
You've always said that you want the band to go out at the top. Is that something you've given a lot of thought to, even before recent events?
We know we're not getting any younger, but before the scare with Bruce, we were thinking we could carry on for a bit longer yet. Then you get that shock and it gives everyone a shake-up. I've said it before: every gig is sacred. And from now on, it's going to be even more like that. You never know what's around the corner. But that's life.

You must have played this out in your mind: walking off stage at the end of Iron Maiden's final show…
Hey, you're scaring me! [Laughs] Fuck off!

Do you know what you would do with your life after Maiden?
I wouldn't give up playing. I've got British Lion to fall back on. I'll play to a couple of hundred people a night. I could produce other bands, or write with other people. But the fact of there being no Maiden any more, I don't like the sound of that.

If it did transpire that* The Book Of Souls *was Iron Maiden's last album, could you live with that?
This is a bit strange. It's not like we were approaching this album thinking there was a problem with Bruce. But when we were finishing up, I actually said to Adrian: "If this was the last one, it would be a good one to go out on."

And so?
I'd still like to do another one. [Laughs] And so would Bruce.



Maiden's mascot, Eddie the Head.

EDDIE: ROSS HALFIN; LIVE: JOHN MCMURTRIE; GROUP: GETTY

In the long history of Iron Maiden, only two men have appeared on every one of the band's albums: Steve Harris, of course, and Dave Murray. The guitarist didn't make the best of starts with the band. Shortly after joining Maiden in 1976, he was fired following an argument with original singer Dennis Wilcock. But Murray was reinstated a few months later, and he has remained as Steve Harris's trusted lieutenant ever since. The reasons for this are simple. As much as he's a fine guitar player, Murray has another quality rare among rock stars: a gentle, even-tempered demeanour, completely devoid of ego.

He calls *Classic Rock* from his home on the island of Maui in Hawaii. He's softly spoken, with an easy laugh that punctuates many of his sentences, this lightness of tone changing only when his thoughts turn to Bruce Dickinson.

Living in a tropical paradise, playing in one of the biggest bands in the world – you've done okay for a working-class kid from the East End.
I've been very fortunate. Blessed. This band has brought so many positive things to my life.

It's a landmark year for Iron Maiden: the band's 40th anniversary.
It doesn't feel like forty years. Time flies when you're having fun. And that's what keeps you in the game. When you're on stage, the adrenalin you get from the audience reaction, it's such a great feeling. Nothing can beat that. And also, the creativity is still there. Doing a new album every few years, it makes the band relevant, and keeps your energy flowing.

When you look back over those years, what were the defining moments for the band?
There are so many. Headlining for the first time at Hammersmith Odeon, that was a beautiful moment. Playing Earls Court – I remember seeing Zeppelin there in '75. Over the forty years there have been lots of good moments.

Considering you were sacked from Maiden in 1976, you've certainly managed to stick around for a long time…
Hey, things like that happen. I had words with the singer after a gig and it all got blown out of proportion. I went over to Steve's house and I was out. But it was done in the nicest possible way. And after a few months I was back in.

You've been at Steve's side ever since. What has made this relationship work for so long?
Good question. I suppose it's because I'm a team player. For myself, it's about being part of something that's way bigger than I am, way bigger than any of us.

You're also a very easy-going bloke. Is that something Steve appreciates?
I've never had an argument with Steve, ever – or with anybody in the band. I don't like confrontation. I steer clear of it. I'm just not that way inclined.

Iron Maiden is Steve's band and you respect that. Is that the bottom line?
Yeah. Everything is channelled through Steve. He's the focus. The rest of us, collectively, add to what makes the band. But Steve has given the band its identity with his ideas, and his approach to writing, which is totally unique and original.

What do you think has kept this band together for so many years?
Sometimes personalities can get in the way, but you have to go beyond that. There are going to be clashes in any band. But we're intelligent enough to find a way to work harmoniously together.

That hasn't always been the case – certainly not with Steve and Bruce.
Well, you hear all that stuff about them fighting, but it can't be like that all the time or we wouldn't be here now. And after all we've been through, this is, I think, the strongest line-up of Iron Maiden – and definitely the last line-up. This is it!

And the future, for all of you, has been determined by Bruce's recovery.
We're just profoundly happy that he's made a full recovery. When I got the call, I was absolutely devastated. You spend some time crying. We knew that his prognosis was excellent, but there were a few moments when, you know, it's not certain. Bruce is okay now. He's bounced back. I'm really happy. But it makes you think. You've got to enjoy your life. You can't take anything for granted.

The longest friendship in Iron Maiden is that of Dave Murray and Adrian Smith, a bond forged when they were at school together in East London in the mid-70s. It was Murray who recommended Smith as the replacement for Dennis Stratton in Iron Maiden in 1980. He left the band in 1990, burned out from a decade of heavy touring. He returned to Maiden, alongside Dickinson, in 1999.

Smith is the least talkative band member, and the most difficult to read. At times he can be extremely candid, when discussing his life and his position in Iron Maiden, past and present. There is, however, one subject he will not go into: his exit from the band in 1990. The reasons for his departure might in part be explained by a few of the anecdotes he tells from the 80s, stories about hanging out with famous hedonists such as Robert Palmer. "Partying," he says. "That's the only way I can put it." ⊳

Adrian Smith: a key part of "a pretty strong unit".

"When we talked about me coming back, I thought I'd do a tour and that would be it."

ADRIAN SMITH

It must feel strange now to know that you were making the album while Bruce was seriously ill.
When I got the call about Bruce, it was just awful. You think: "He's too young for this." The band was secondary. I just wanted the guy to get better.

Did you believe he would pull through?
I think, with cancer, the mental attitude is very important. In the last few years we've lost two people from our crew – Steve Gadd and Andy Matthews – both of them to cancer. But with Bruce, somehow I never doubted that he'd come through. I couldn't imagine him letting this thing beat him.

You and Bruce both left the band at separate times in the early 90s and returned together in 1999. In the years when you were out of the band, did you keep in touch with the other guys?
A little. Everyone started having kids so we saw each other mostly at the kids' parties and because there was a kind of Maiden wives' club! [Laughs] My family would visit Dave's in Hawaii. When I left, there were no hard feelings.

It must have been a difficult decision for you to leave Maiden. Did you have any sleepless nights about it?
Yes, of course. It was probably the best decision for me and for the band. But I wasn't in a good state of mind back then.

Can you elaborate on that?
Honestly, I'd rather not go there. What I'll say is that the decision was mutual. I think they'd had enough of me as well.

What changed, for you and them, when you rejoined the band?
I'd grown a bit. It might sound strange, but having had kids, having done my solo albums, I just felt a bit more confident about myself.

It sounds strange that you would lack confidence, having written some important songs for the band.
Well, I never considered myself a virtuoso and still don't. When I was first in Maiden, I struggled with that. I always felt like someone was going to find me out. I'm not a guitar hero – I'm just Aidy Smith from Hackney! [Laughs] But after I came back, the first song we recorded was one of mine, *Wicker Man*. I felt so happy. And I felt different, having had a break.

Did you think then that you'd still be in Iron Maiden fifteen years later?
Probably not. In fact, when we first talked about me coming back, I thought maybe I'd just do a tour and that would be it. Steve said, "No, I want to have three guitarists. It'll work." And once Steve has an idea, he doesn't change his mind.

So what is the key to the band's longevity?
We're all a bit older, a bit wiser. You know what the band's about and you know what's best for the band, so that's what you do. We know each other so well that it just works. It didn't always work for me. I spent nine years out of the band. But now I appreciate it more. Of course there are egos. Everyone's got an ego. But we've come through all the ups and downs, and here we are – still a pretty strong unit.

Nicko McBrain is the oldest member of Iron Maiden. Now 63, the drummer joined the band in 1982. "More than half my life I've been with Iron Maiden," he laughs. "It's part of my sinew."

That booming laugh is emblematic of a larger-than-life persona common among rock drummers. On this level, he is, along with Bruce Dickinson, the biggest personality in Iron Maiden. There is, though, a complexity to McBrain. In 1999, he converted to Christianity following an experience he described as "a calling". He refers to his faith as a private matter, and sees no conflict between this and his life as a rock star. He says that he gave up smoking dope – "wonga", as he calls it – in 1986. But only now is he seriously considering giving up alcohol as the rigours of touring harden with age.

He calls from his home in Florida, near Fort Lauderdale, where he has lived for more than 20 years with his second wife, Rebecca. Unchanged by all those years in America is his blunt working-class London accent.

We all know what the two hardest jobs in a rock band are – Bruce's and yours. How are you bearing up these days?
I've got to be honest, the older I get, the harder it becomes to do this. That's one of the reasons I haven't had a drink for three months.

"I prayed every day for Bruce. I believe in the good Lord, and my prayers were answered."

NICKO MCBRAIN

Nicko McBrain: Iron Maiden's life and soul.

And?
I feel fucking old! [Laughs] At least when I was drinking I didn't feel it, except for the hangovers.

Seriously?
I feel good, actually. But I needed to start looking after my body a bit more. I've started to get a bit of arthritis in my hands. There's a gruelling tour coming up next year and I've got to be fit. I've taken a lot of inspiration from the way that Bruce has fought his way back to health. He's a strong man, Bruce.

Even so…
Well, I'd be lying if I said I hadn't feared the worst when they mentioned the C word. It was a very heavy time. For his family it must have been unbearable. But my feeling in my heart was, he's such a strong guy, not just physically but mentally.

As a practising Christian, did you pray for Bruce?
I prayed every day for him. I believe in the good Lord, and my prayers were answered, as well as the prayers of everybody else.

Do you think the other guys in the band might have said a few prayers for him too?
I'm sure they did. Bruce also told me he was singing *Heaven Can Wait* in the shower, which is classic Bruce humour.

When Bruce was going through this, did you re-evaluate your own life?
We're mortals, and you do question your mortality when something like this happens. But he's over the hurdle now. I understand Bruce is doing a bit of flying again now, so he's got to be all right.

Who in the band are you closest to?
At a pinch, I'd say Steve. He's my confidante. If I have things I need to talk about, it's Steve I turn to.

I hate to betray his confidence, but Steve says you're the biggest moaner in the band…
Ha ha ha. You bastard! But I suppose Steve is right. I'm the one that moans and groans and flies off the handle. At the same time, I've always been the comedian of the band, the life and soul. But when I have an off day, yeah, I'm the moany one.

Steve and Bruce have had their differences in the past. What changed?
It's like when two people fall in love, get married, then separate, and end up getting married again. There's a love affair going on, and the sex is the music. It's not a gay thing, don't get me wrong. It's a weird analogy! [Laughs] But that's what I feel.

When you're not working with Maiden, what do you do with your life?
I go out and twat a golf ball. And I have another band, The McBrainiacs. Funnily enough, it's an Iron Maiden tribute band. We do a bit of AC/DC, Purple, Hendrix, but primarily it's Maiden songs.

Do you think much about life after Maiden?
I've thought about it, I'll admit that. But I can't see us hanging it up any time soon. Let's get one thing straight: we would never become a parody of ourselves. But it's my job to drive Maiden, and one day I'm not going to be able to do it any more.

So, realistically, how long have you got?
Ideally… ten years? Nah, don't see that. Imagine me trying to play *Run To The Hills* at fucking seventy-three years old! So I don't know, mate. But I'm planning on bowing out gracefully.

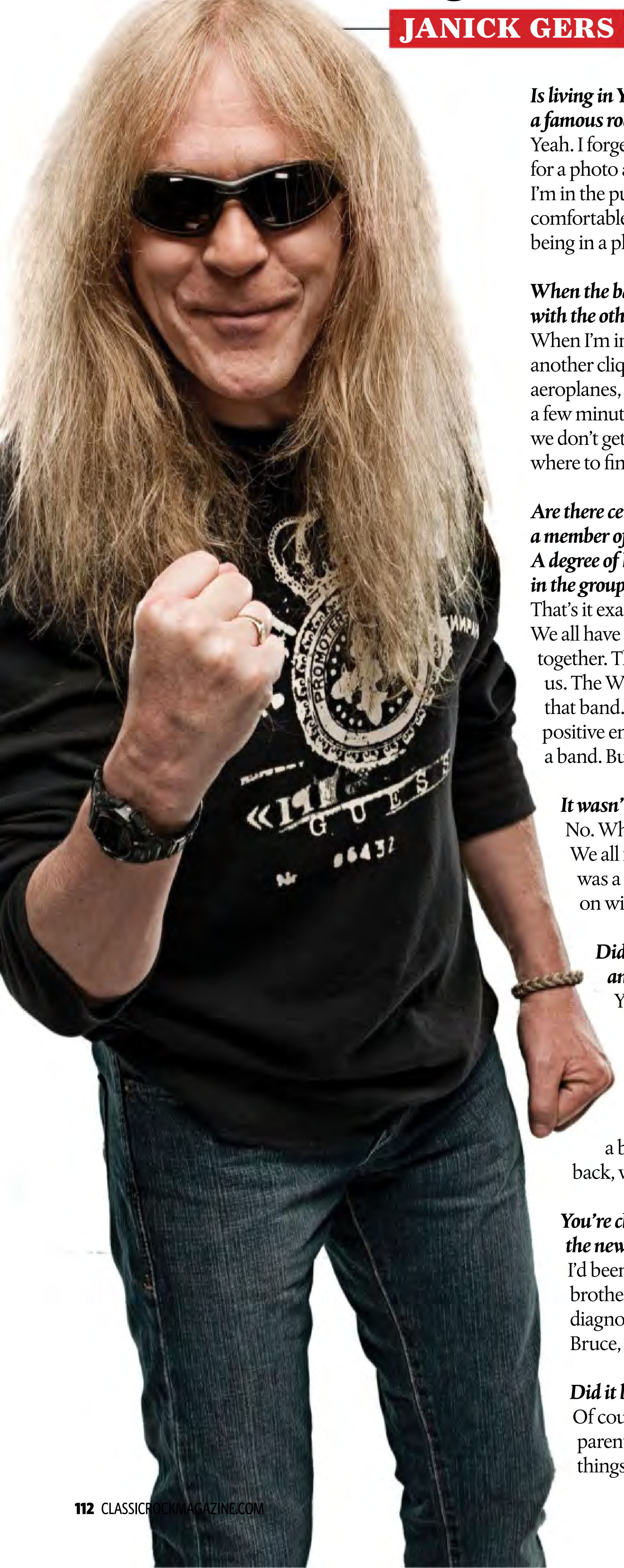
Janick Gers is the one member of Iron Maiden who was not present during the band's rise in the 1980s. Even so, the guitarist has been a fixture for the last 25 years, having joined in 1990 as the replacement for Adrian Smith. Born in Hartlepool, Gers has now settled close by, in Yarm, a small town near Stockton-on-Tees. He's alone in his house when he calls. His wife and two teenage children are on holiday without him, on the Greek island of Kos. "I'm enjoying a little peace and quiet," he says. "I've always been comfortable in my own company."

Gers was a member of White Spirit, NWOBHM-era contemporaries of Maiden, before joining ex-Deep Purple singer Ian Gillan's solo band, Gillan. With Iron Maiden he has enjoyed a level of success far beyond anything he had previously experienced, yet he remains a man of simple pleasures. "I like the nice things in life," he says. "But it doesn't take a lot to make me happy."

Steve lives in the Bahamas, Dave in Hawaii, and you live in a little place in the North East of England…
Where the north winds blow cold! [Laughs] But I like it here. It's half an hour from where I was born. The people are great. I go out for a drink most nights and wander home by myself. I'm in my own little bubble here. ▷

"I forget I'm in a band until someone asks for an autograph at half-one in the morning in the pub."

JANICK GERS



Is living in Yarm the perfect antidote to life in a famous rock band?
Yeah. I forget I'm in a band until someone asks for a photo at half-one in the morning when I'm in the pub and my nose is bright red. I'm comfortable in my own company, and I like being in a place where nobody knows me.

When the band aren't working, do you socialise with the others?
When I'm in London I see Bruce, but he has another clique of friends that talk about aeroplanes, which I can't handle for more than a few minutes. We all live in different places, so we don't get much chance to meet. But they know where to find me – in the pub round the corner.

Are there certain qualities that are required to be a member of Iron Maiden, beyond musicianship? A degree of humility perhaps? A sense of your place in the group?
That's it exactly. You have to be down to earth. We all have our idiosyncrasies, but we seem to fit together. There has to be give and take between us. The Who, there was a negative atmosphere in that band. Jagger and Richards had that negative/positive energy. It's part of the mechanics of a band. But we get on tremendously well.

It wasn't always so.
No. When Bruce left, everybody was hurt. We all felt we'd been left high and dry. It was a really difficult time. But we carried on with Blaze, and we did okay.

Did you have reservations about Bruce and Adrian coming back to the band?
You've got to build bridges. I'm a big fan of [Japanese director Akira] Kurosawa's movies: he'll show you five different perspectives of the same thing. And you've got to understand that when you're in a band. After Bruce and Adrian came back, we couldn't have been happier.

You're close to Bruce. How did you deal with the news that he had cancer?
I'd been in hospital that week with my brother-in-law, who had also been diagnosed with cancer. So the call about Bruce, it knocks you on your back.

Did it bring a sense of your own mortality?
Of course. Not long ago I lost both my parents when I was away on tour. Those things make you feel very deeply. ▷

MAI

IRON MAIDEN

(1980)
Steve Harris: "It's all there – powerful songs, loads of attitude, and as a singer, Paul [Di'Anno] had real charisma. But everyone knows I wasn't happy with the production. That album didn't have enough of the fire and the anger that we had in our playing. We used to laugh about the producer [Will Malone] sitting there with his feet up on the desk, smoking a big cigar and reading *Country Life* – because he didn't do fuck all else. So in the end we would just ignore him. It was still a good album, it just didn't sound as ferocious as we did when we played live."

Killers

(1981)
Dave Murray: "On the first album we were playing fast, almost like punk rock, but with more melody. Martin [Birch]'s production on *Killers* gave us more polish, without losing our edge. The title track on that album is still one of my favourites. It has such a pure and raw energy, and we carried on playing it live for years. This was the last album we made with Paul. When Bruce came in, that was an even bigger turning point for the band. But I think Paul sounded great on *Killers*. The whole album is really powerful and atmospheric. And really, it was Martin Birch who brought that out of us."

The Number of the Beast

(1982)
Bruce Dickinson: "I knew I had joined a great band. I also knew I could make it even better. I had a vision for *The Number Of The Beast*: my voice glued on to Maiden equals something much bigger. We did it fast – four or five weeks. We'd be in the studio till five or six in the morning. The one mistake we made was putting *Gangland* on the album instead of *Total Eclipse*. We picked *Gangland* because it was the first thing we ever recorded together properly. But the rest of the album was fantastic. *Hallowed Be Thy Name* was a precursor to *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*. That song, and the whole album, took Maiden to a different level.

DEN'S VOYAGE

IRON MAIDEN ALBUM BY ALBUM – BY THE PEOPLE WHO MADE THEM.

Piece of Mind

(1983)
Nicko McBrain: "It was my first record with Maiden, so it's very special to me. The first time I ever saw them play live was in 1979, and I knew they had it. Clive [Burr] was such a great drummer. I certainly wasn't out for his job, but I did think to myself, 'I could be in that band.' And in the end, it was meant to be, I suppose. For me, making *Piece Of Mind* was one big adventure. We were recording in the Caribbean, and I'd never been there before. And of course we had all these epic tracks – *The Trooper*, *Revelation*, *Flight Of Icarus* and best of all for me, *Where Eagles Dare*. The intro in that track – that drum riff – is right up there with the likes of Phil Collins and Neil Peart. It's still one of my favourite Maiden songs."

POWERSLAVE

(1984)
Adrian Smith: "We recorded the album at Compass Point Studios in Nassau. And in those days, some of us were easily distracted. One night I was with Martin Birch, partying 'til three in the morning. The next day I turned up at the studio, really hungover, and there's Martin, still up from the night before, and beside him is Robert Palmer, who lived next door to the studio. I had to do my solo for the track *Powerslave* and I had the shakes, but I just went, 'Fuck it.' I pulled off a solo and Robert Palmer was going, 'That's fucking great!'"

Live After Death

(1985)
Bruce Dickinson: "It was a real statement, a live double, like the ones we all loved when we were growing up. My favourite live album is Deep Purple's *Made In Japan*. But I recall reading Ian Gillan saying, 'I thought it was a piece of shit, I sounded crap on it.' And I was like, 'No, no, no – you're wrong!' The funny thing is, I'm the same with *Live After Death*. When Maiden fans tell me it's our best live album, I'm like, 'Oh, I don't know about that.' But just recently I listened to *Live After Death* and it sounded pretty good. And 'Scream for me, Long Beach!' has become a part of Maiden folklore."

SOMEWHERE IN TIME

(1986)
Adrian Smith: "We went for a new kind of sound on *Somewhere In Time*, using guitar synths, and two of my songs for that album came out really well, *Stranger In A Strange Land* and *Wasted Years*. When we were mixing in New York, I was in my hotel room listening to the tracks with Martin Birch, and there was a knock at the door. I opened it and Tom Jones was standing there. He said: 'I heard the music, lads. Do you mind if I come in?' He listened to the album, and as we talked I realised that what we do is pretty much the same: making records, doing shows. Except that with Maiden, it's a bit louder."

Seventh Son of a Seventh Son

(1988)
Steve Harris: "It was a new challenge for us, making a concept album. I've always loved prog – Yes, Genesis, ELP – and this album's title track was a powerful song with that prog element to it. Not everyone liked the album at the time. Bruce even said to me that Queensrÿche had made a better concept album than ours, with *Operation: Mindcrime*. I said, 'That's a really good album, but ours is a fucking great album!' Not long after that, Bruce did a solo album. He was struggling within himself. We didn't realise how much until later."

No Prayer For The Dying

(1990)
Janick Gers: "I'd done Bruce's solo album and tour, and we hadn't played any Maiden songs live, but then Bruce asked me to learn four Maiden songs and go down to Steve's place. That was when they told me that Adrian had left. The first song we jammed on was *The Trooper*, and it sounded so tight, so powerful, they just said, 'You're in.' I said to myself: 'I'll last two weeks here. Once they get to know me, they won't like me!' But it was fantastic. The tour was a back-to-basics show, which was cool. Some people missed the plastic pyramids, but I can take them or leave them!"

Fear Of The Dark

(1992)
Dave Murray: "It was a very different album for Maiden. A lot of the music was more a classical kind of rock, with lots of time changes. I can still remember the moment when we recorded the song *Fear Of The Dark*. We knew right away that it was going to be a standout live track. Everything about it – the power, the melodies, the lyrics, the pacing of the song and the way it changes – it really sums up what Maiden is all about. The way the fans sing it when we're playing live, it really has become an anthem for us."

THE X FACTOR

(1995)
Janick Gers: "When Bruce quit, I couldn't believe it. It felt like we'd been left high and dry, and we had to decide what to do: do we stop or carry on? We listened to so many tapes of singers. But with Blaze [Bayley], we just felt that he had the right attitude and that he had a really raucous voice. As soon as we got him rehearsing with the band, it felt good, and right from the start we wrote some great stuff. *Sign Of The Cross* was such a powerful song, really dark and atmospheric. And I thought Blaze really came into his own with *Man On The Edge*. It was important to show people that we could do it without Bruce."

VIRTUAL XI

(1998)
Nicko McBrain: "Blaze did a great job on *Virtual XI*. Steve wrote some really great stuff for *Virtual XI* – tracks like *Futureal*, *The Clansman*, *The Angel And The Gambler*. It's an album we're all very proud of. But as it turned out, it was the last one with Blaze. We knew Bruce wanted to come back, and obviously there was a question mark: 'Would it happen again? He's shit on us once...' There was that hurdle to get over, but once we did that, by talking to each other, it was like a new band."

BRAVE NEW WORLD

(2000)
Adrian Smith: "For Bruce and myself, it felt like coming home. Maybe in the outside world, this album was viewed as a comeback, but not for the other fellas that had been in the band for all that time while we were away. The 90s might have been a bit of a low point for Maiden because of the emergence of Nirvana and the whole grunge thing, but Maiden were still out there with Blaze, playing in massive arenas in South America. So if some people want to call *Brave New World* a comeback, that's okay, but I think a better word is 'revitalisation'."

Dance of Death

(2003)
Janick Gers: "I loved the feel of this album. Everything about it felt big. And the song *Dance Of Death* is one that I'm really proud of. It was based on the Ingmar Bergman movie, *The Seventh Seal*. I saw it when I was a kid and just loved it. It's about someone looking for hope in a world that's devastated. And at the end of the movie there is this dance of death. The funny thing is, I was on the Tube not long after we'd written it, and I saw this huge poster of *The Seventh Seal*. Such a weird coincidence."

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

(2006)
Bruce Dickinson: "There's a lot of great stuff on this album. A lot of strange time signatures. It was a very brave move for us on that tour – to play the album from end to end: 'We're going to play the whole fucking album for the people who are about the here and now, the people who are interested in the band going forward.' You've got to keep on making new music, and great new music, because without it you're just the world's biggest karaoke band."

THE FINAL FRONTIER

(2010)
Steve Harris: "Bruce had a bit of fun with that title, joking as if it was our last album. We all knew it wasn't, that we'd do at least one more. Really, that title was just my science fiction thing coming into play. I'm fascinated by all the conspiracy theories about alien life. I'm not so sure I believe that stuff, but I wouldn't rule it out. That's a pub debate right there. But that title gave us a great concept for the artwork. And there's certainly quite a proggy feel to a few of the longer tracks on the album."

THE BOOK OF SOULS

(2015)
Steve Harris: "We knew that this, more than any other album, was going to be a long one. We don't seem to write short songs any more. I don't know why. The title track is a big song. And then Bruce brought in *Empire Of The Clouds*. It was only when we started recording it that we realised: 'Christ, this is ridiculously long!' To me, it's almost like a West End play. I've told Bruce that I think it's a masterpiece. He might have thought I was winding him up, but I wish I'd written it, and I can't give someone a better compliment."

Bruce Dickinson: fighting fit.

Dickinson on 1982's *Number Of The Beast* tour.

LIVE: GETTY; BRUCE: JOHN MCMURTRIE

Since Bruce got the all-clear, have you celebrated with him?

We had a night out recently, drinking, and he was in fine form. He told my wife how much weight he'd lost, and she said, "That's not really the way to do it, Bruce!" That put me at ease. And he was buzzing. It was the old Bruce.

And so, going forward, what's next?

The band can't go on forever. We knew that before Bruce was ill. We've talked about it. But the band is still vital, still growing. The new album proves it. I don't know how long we can keep that up. I still love it, we all do. But if the moment ever came when we'd lost that energy, that desire to keep pushing forward, I'd like to think we'd all be man enough to say we'll stop.

It's a sunny morning when Bruce Dickinson meets *Classic Rock* at a private members' club on Chiswick High Road. He's lived in this part of West London since 1981, with his family.

Clad in plain black T-shirt, baggy gym shorts and trainers, Dickinson has arrived this morning on a bicycle. He cycles most days, each time a little further. He's noticeably thinner, having lost weight during his courses of chemotherapy and radiotherapy. His face is a little pale and drawn. Apart from that, his appearance is unchanged, and in conversation, he is his usual ebullient self.

Typically of a man with an expensive private education, Dickinson has always been a high achiever, not only as the singer for a famous rock band, but in his other interests. In the sport of fencing, he competed for Great Britain. As an author, he wrote two satirical novels. He worked as a pilot on commercial flights for the now-defunct airline Astraeus, and he's in the process of setting up his own airline. The Boeing 757 he piloted during Maiden's Somewhere Back In Time tour has been upgraded to a bigger and more powerful 747 for next year's tour.

At 57, Dickinson is the youngest member of Iron Maiden. It's one reason, he says, why he never expected that he would be the one who would end up staring death in the face…

Bruce, post cancer treatment: waiting to sound the Air Raid Siren again.

"This was not the universe having its revenge on me – it's just random shit."

BRUCE DICKINSON

How did you discover you had cancer?
We were in Paris, in the middle of making the album, and… something wasn't right. I knew it and I could feel it. I had earache. I thought, "It's November, maybe it's a cold." But I also had this lump on my neck. So I went on Dr. Wikipedia and diagnosed myself. It seemed, in all probability, that I had the human papillomavirus, a tumour on my tongue. In layman's terms, it's cervical cancer of the gob. If a woman gets cervical cancer, it's squamous cell carcinoma. This is squamous cell carcinoma of the tongue.

So then what?
I ignored it. I thought: "Internet hypochondriac. Don't be daft." I didn't go the doctor.

Why not?
Because I thought, "If I am right, I don't want to know. Not now. I want to know when I've finished the album. Then I'll deal with it."

Most people in that situation would rush to a doctor to make sure that if it was cancer, they would be treated immediately.
I know. But I wanted to finish the album.

Did you tell anyone? Your wife?
No. I sort of mentioned it in passing, the lump on my neck. She said, "Oh it might be glandular fever."

How convinced were you that your self-diagnosis was right?
Fifty-fifty. Deep down, I knew there was something wrong.

How soon did you seek out qualified medical advice?
Six weeks later. We were finishing the album and I saw a doctor. He had a feel around my neck. Then he went straight for the goolies. I thought, "He's either very friendly or very thorough." He said, "You need a head and neck scan and a biopsy of that lump." A few days later I saw my doctor in London.

And your self-diagnosis proved to be correct?
Absolutely. I'd wondered how they tell you. Is it over tea and biscuits? But the oncologist just said, "Well, I have a letter here that says you have head and neck cancer." So that's how they do it: straight between the eyes. I appreciate that. I was told I had a golf ball-sized tumour on my tongue, and another in my lymph node. But the oncologist also said: "You're an excellent candidate for a complete cure." He told me, "I'll get rid of this for you and it won't come back."

Did you believe that, or did you fear the worst?
I thought I would probably be okay, on the balance of probabilities. I'd gone quite heavily into the medical research papers on the internet. I had nothing better to do. I'd looked at my odds. With my age and my profile, it was eighty per cent in my favour.

It's the other twenty per cent that would put the fear of God into most people.
I didn't see the point in being fearful. You know me – I'm quite bouncy anyway.

Even so…
Well, I went through a couple of days of 'poor me' and 'why me?' But a mate of mine had a better question: not 'why me?' but 'why not me?' This wasn't the universe having its revenge on me. It's just random shit. It's got to happen to somebody and it's happened to me. So, crack on with it. If the outcome is bad, it won't be for want of trying.

What was your state of mind like in the days that followed?
All I noticed for three days after my diagnosis was graveyards and hospitals. And when I sat at home watching daytime TV, there were all these ads – 'Cancer. We can beat it together' – and ads for life insurance. But after those three days, I thought, "Stop it. Start noticing women's legs and pubs again. Get back to normality."

Was there anything else you could do?
I started taking mushroom supplements. I asked the oncologist if that was okay. He said, "That's fine – as long as you're not taking any heavy metals." And I went, "Really?" He meant iron or whatever.

That sounds like a line from a bad sitcom.
It is! But there's a black humour in all of this. I got all of the one-liners out of the way early. Like when people ask, "Why aren't you touring?" I say, "The reasons are too tumourous to mention."

What treatment did you have?
I had nine weeks of chemotherapy. In that same period I had thirty-three sessions of radiation. The effect of the chemo was… interesting. A lot of strange sensations: like an out-of-body experience. And the last two or three weeks was… yeah, rough. I'd get zapped, go home and just sit on the couch. My full-time job was just to try to get liquid and food down. Liquids only, oral morphine, and oral antibiotics, because your immune system is on the floor. Milkshakes I could just about manage. My tongue hurt so much, I couldn't speak – a blessing for the wife. My way of getting to sleep at night was to put kitchen roll soaked in Bonjela around my back teeth so it would anaesthetise my tongue. Then it would wear off and I'd wake up in the middle of the night going, "Aaargh!"

So was this a psychological battle as much as a physical one?
It was. Because you had to drink so much fluid every day, I'd sit there with my head in the sink going, "Okay, one more gulp of water." After the first diagnosis, they'd offered me a feeding tube. I said, "Fuck right off. I'll feed myself. I'll get it down somehow. If I can't, you can shove a tube up my nose, like they do with hunger strikers. But I will do it." And the doc said, "Fair dues."

What would you say was your lowest point during this whole process?
The last three weeks were the worst. To be honest with you, you're so flat-out knackered that you don't have the energy to be enthusiastic about anything.

Did they put you on the heavy stuff, morphine?
Ah, the old morphine! [Laughs] I was taking it by the spoonful, and it was a bit disappointing, really. I wanted to see pink elephants! I was expecting to want to cut my ear off. But – nothing. It was all rather underwhelming. ▷

Maiden England: live at the O2, August 3, 2013.

"People ask: 'Why aren't you touring?' I say: 'Reasons too tumourous to mention.'"

BRUCE DICKINSON

When all of this was happening to you, who knew about it?
Nobody except my immediate family, and Rod and the band. After I got the diagnosis, Rod said we should tell the press, and tell the promoters why we're cancelling the tour. I said, "Don't fucking tell anybody! Can you just wait until at least I've finished going to hospital every day? Fucking hell!" So we timed the announcement with the end of my treatment.

Steve says that when he got the news, he sent you texts because he didn't think you'd be able to talk, or want to.
He was right. But I'll tell you what else he sent me – three books on how to beat cancer, and a trampoline! [Laughs] It was fucking brilliant. A mini-trampoline, so when I was watching daytime telly I'd have something to do.

After the radiation, had you lost your hair?
No. But I grew a big, shaggy beard, like Captain Haddock [from the children's comic *Tin Tin*], and that fell out – all at once, from under my chin, in the pub.

What were you doing in a pub?
Having a beer!

Ask a silly question…
I couldn't taste the beer. I lost all sense of taste as soon as I started chemo. But I had to get out into the world at some point, so why not the pub?

You've now had the all-clear. Is that definitive?
Yeah.

Could the cancer return?
In theory, yes, so I have a check-up every month for the first year.

After all you've been through, how has this changed you?
From a practical point of view, I take lots of mushroom supplements [laughs].

And on a more profound level?
You mean the spiritual side of things? No great revelation on that score. There was a brief moment of, oh, mortality might be cropping up a bit sooner than I expected. But I thought: "I'll deal with that when they finally tell me you've only got a year or two left." In which case, I'll say, "Well, I'll beat that."

In all of this, has your relationship with the other guys in the band changed?
Yes, depending upon how people are. Some people are just, "Wow, I'm really glad you're okay." Other people are: "I'm glad you're okay because it scared the life out of me that you might go and I might be next." Some people project their own fear upon you. When they give you a hug, what they're actually hugging is this sense of: "I'm so relieved I'm still alive." You can detect that.

Steve had said to Adrian, before they knew you had cancer, that if the new Maiden album were the last, it would be a good one to go out on…
I felt the same thing going into the treatment. Before I could see there could be a positive outcome, I thought, "If this was the last thing I ever recorded, with this voice, as it were, it's a pretty good way to bow out. It would be ironic."

In what way ironic?
That you do this great double album, with this amazing song *Empire Of The Clouds*, and people are saying, "Oh my God, you're singing better than ever." And then, suddenly, it's gone.

Steve thinks that* Empire Of The Clouds *is a masterpiece. Is it the most important song you've ever written?
For me it was – and doubly so after I got diagnosed. The story in that song is very poignant. The R101 was this amazing airship, the equivalent to Concorde and the QE2 rolled into one, and it crashed on its maiden voyage. There were only five survivors. As a kid I built a big plastic model of the R101, and the story stuck with me.

There are many epic Iron Maiden songs, but none quite so epic as this.
Exactly! I wrote it on piano, and I'm a two-fingered pianist. I thought at one point, "Ooh, this is a bit Billy Joel." And then I decided on a little overture at the beginning, a nice bit of cello, some horns. None of the instruments that I had in my head was a guitar. It was written for Irish fiddles – diddle-de-diddle-de-diddle…

In fairness, diddle-de-diddle-de-diddle is very Iron Maiden.
Totally Iron Maiden! It was designed for fiddles, but I knew in reality it was going to be guitars. And that would Maiden-ise it immediately.

And now the album is finally out, what next?
I've got the most difficult period at the moment. I'm running around doing all kinds of other stuff, but with the voice, I just have to wait. I don't like waiting. Last December, I asked the doc: "Assuming I get rid of this, how long before I'm back to normal?" He said about a year. I said, "I'll beat that."

Typical Bruce Dickinson.
Absolutely. It's a challenge.

When did you start singing again?
I had a little go in the kitchen, a little yell. It was interesting. The upper-mid register was a bit yodelly, a bit Von Trapp family. I sang a few notes, got it warmed up, so I thought I'd let rip. I tried one from the new album, *If Eternity Should Fail*. Then I had a go with *The Trooper*. And I thought, "It's there."

So that voice, the Air Raid Siren – will it sound the way it did before?
It needs time, like Doctor Who, to regenerate. It's had a pretty good kicking from the radiation. The very top of the voice, that's great. The low end is fine too. It's only the only mid-range of my voice that needs some work. I might have to go to vocal rehab. I might have to take some lessons.

And what does all this mean for the future – for you and for Iron Maiden?
Well, the worst case scenario was: I have the treatment, I don't get rid of it, and then the guy says, "Sorry mate, you're on your way out." The best case scenario was: you get rid of it, everything gets back to normal, and there will be no difference at all in your voice. Well, that last bit hasn't happened yet. But I'm absolutely confident it will. Wild horses are not going to stop me from getting back on that stage. And you know, I'm still here. I won.

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NO WASTED YEARS

Pro pilot, fencer, cancer survivor, author… As his 2017 autobiography *What Does This Button Do?* proved, there's much more to **Bruce Dickinson** than just fronting one of the biggest bands on the planet.

Words: **Dave Everley**

Bruce Dickinson would like you to know that when it came to writing his autobiography, *What Does This Button Do?*, he didn't need any outside help. "People ask: 'So who was your ghost writer?' and I go: "Actually, I did it myself,"' he says proudly. "I physically wrote 180,000 words, and all of it was on WH Smith pads in actual handwriting, proper old-school."

Writing an entire book by hand is a very Bruce Dickinson thing to do. The Iron Maiden singer is seemingly a man who can turn his hand to pretty much anything: flying aircraft, fencing, fronting one of the most successful bands of the past 40 years. The exception is swimming: "I am one of nature's sinkers," he says.

What Does This Button Do? is a genuinely fascinating and funny look back at Dickinson's life. From his early days growing up in the Nottinghamshire mining town of Worksop (where he was raised by his grandparents until the age of six) to his roller-coaster 40-year music career, it paints a candid picture of a life well lived.

Today Dickinson is in characteristically voluble mood, expounding on everything from the torrid time he had in the British educational system to his successful battle with cancer.

"Writing a book forces you to look at yourself and what you've done," he says. "It's an education."

Your parents were often absent during your early years – they were on the road with a performing dog act. Were you always destined to follow them into show business?
Even before I knew properly who my parents were, I was after a pair of angel wings in the school nativity play. I wanted to be the person wearing them. My school reports were always depressingly similar: "Has not fulfilled his good potential, would do better if he didn't play the class clown 24 hours a day."

You paint a vivid picture of your school days: bullying, regular beatings from the teachers. It sounds pretty horrific, but did it also make you the man you are?
It's like the opening of the book says: everything moves in mysterious ways. You've got no idea where you're going to end up. You have to take things as they come. The one thing I am, I suppose, is stubborn. I don't fall over. Or if I do, I get back up.

Some of the teachers you mention were fairly despicable. You write about some of the canings they dished out as if there was a sexual, S&M-like element to them.
The whole era was very strange. These were creepy, dirty old men, and it was thought to be normal and acceptable. The whole Jimmy Savile thing and the rest of it opened up a massive can of worms, because that stuff was socially acceptable. The sort of stuff you'd be banged up for now, and quite rightly. You have to pinch yourself and go: "I'm really not living in the seventies any more."

> "MY SCHOOL REPORTS WERE ALWAYS SIMILAR: 'WOULD DO BETTER IF HE DIDN'T PLAY THE CLASS CLOWN 24 HOURS A DAY.'"

Was there anything good about that time?
There were a lot of brilliant things about the seventies, cos it was pretty disorganised and anarchic. But the flip side to that was that a lot of people got away with doing things that really weren't so pleasant.

There's one teacher, John Worsley, that you speak highly of. He introduced you to fencing. Did you stay in contact with him?
I didn't, but funnily enough I met his brother years later. Maiden were doing something in Florida in the middle of the eighties. There was this fencing competition in Fort Myers, and I ended up driving out there. I met this bloke called Worsley. I went: "Worsley? John Worsley?" And he went: "Yeah, that's my brother." Fencing is a very, very small world.

Do you still fence?
Yes, but I hardly have any time to go near it. I keep wandering around and looking at all my kit, going: "It's getting a bit rusty now." [Laughs] Like me.

Have you still got it in you, though?
Absolutely. If I had a good run up, where I didn't have other stuff going on, I'd be good. I love it. It's really good fun. It's cathartic and you get out there and have a yell and a scream but nobody dies.

In his late teens, Dickinson moved to London, ostensibly to study history at university but in reality to pursue a career in music. After a few false starts, most notably in pub-rockers Speed, later called Shots (the highlight of their career was *Dracula*, a homage to the literary vampire that was more *Carry On Screaming* than it was Bram Stoker), Dickinson ended up as frontman with the NWOBHM band Samson, where he traded under the name Bruce Bruce and sported an impressive moustache.

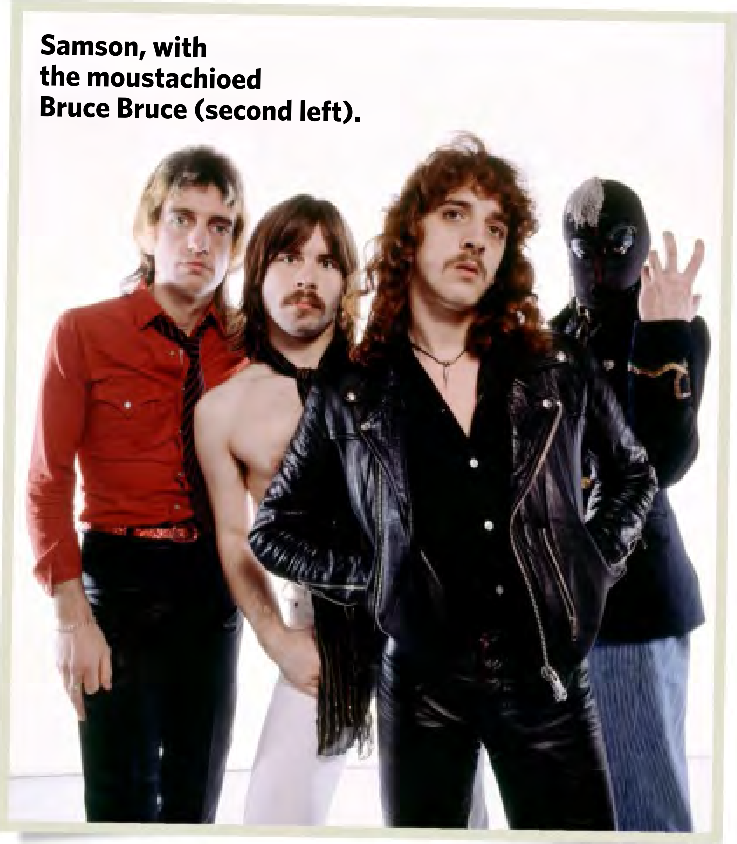
If you met the twenty-year-old Bruce Dickinson in the pub, what would you think?
Gosh. Light the blue touch-paper! I don't know what's going on with that kid, but something is going to happen. He's either going to end up doing what he says he's going to do or he's going to end up in jail. Or at the bottom of the river.

You make no secret of your spliff-smoking days in Samson, but then you stopped.
Had Samson not been such a bunch of potheads, I wouldn't have bothered at all. I was like: "I've done the cannabis now, I don't see any point in taking it further." Nothing else happens. All that does happen is that people seem to slow down and eat a lot.

Did drugs get in the way of your ambition?
No, not really. They just didn't do anything for me creatively. The first time, you're like: "Whoa, what's all this about?!" But I soon realised I could get the same effect just by wandering around and using my imagination. I thought: "I don't need to smoke something to go and imagine that." It was a nice awakening, but once your consciousness is awake, you go: "I don't need that any more." It's like writing really trippy lyrics – I've never taken an acid trip in my life. I've never eaten a mushroom or had anything remotely hallucinogenic. Everything comes out of my imagination.

You always avoided cocaine. Why? It must have been freely available.
I never got cocaine. I got speed, because it made you run around really fast. But then it also made you feel absolutely shit. As far as cocaine is concerned, people get mashed and then sit there with the most stupid gibberish coming out of their gobs for hours and hours on end. It's just tedious at best, and at worst it turns people into paranoid nutcases. So I've got no time for ▷

JOHN McMURTRIE/PRESS



Samson, with the moustachioed Bruce Bruce (second left).

SAMSON: GETTY MAIN: JOHN MCMURTRIE/PRESS

cocaine whatsoever. And obviously anything resembling depressives, I just don't get. I don't get why someone would want to shut reality off. Cos reality is brilliant.

You write about Iron Maiden's success in the eighties in the book, but also about the hard work involved. What does the pie chart of 'Fun' versus 'Not Fun' in that period look like?
By and large we were working so hard, it was Groundhog Day: the venues get bigger, the venues get bigger, the venues get bigger. The roller coaster never stopped going down. At one point, Rod [Smallwood, manager] had us doing nine shows, one day off, eight shows, one day off. I said: "You can't run human beings like that, they'll fall over."

We were always arguing with Rod about making life more comfortable for ourselves. At one point, halfway through a tour, the stage manager literally sleepwalked off the stage. We said: "Don't you think it's about time we got a tour bus?" And he went [grudgingly]: "Yeah, alright then."

But was the whole thing actually enjoyable?
Of course it was enjoyable. The only thing you miss is any semblance of life outside it. That's where it started to feel oppressive, especially towards the end of the *Powerslave* tour. You think: "What's the point of all this?" And it turns into the world's biggest circular argument. "What's the point?" "The point of it all is just to do it." "Well, there's other things I want to do…"

For Dickinson, there certainly were other things to do. In the book, he doesn't hold back when talking about his growing disillusion with Maiden during the early 90s, and his subsequent solo career. The impression of that period, at least initially, is of a man who stepped out of a gilded cage, only to spend the next few years trying to escape his own shadow.

What was it like to leave Iron Maiden?
It was like being a wild animal in a cage. They suddenly let you out and say: "There you go, off you go into the jungle, feed yourself." And you go: "I've forgotten how to do that." When I quit, everybody assumed I knew what to do, but I didn't.

It was a question of building it all up again. Most bands have the luxury of doing that when nobody's bothered about them, so they make all these really goofy mistakes. I just happened to go and do the whole thing in public. In retrospect, I didn't do a bad job of it once I'd got things in focus.

"I'VE NEVER HAD ANYTHING REMOTELY HALLUCINOGENIC. EVERYTHING COMES OUT OF MY IMAGINATION."

What do you mean?
There were some great songs on [Dickinson's first post-Maiden solo album] *Balls To Picasso*. The big Achilles heel was that there was no clear direction – that's what the listening audience want. But even if I had come out with a clear direction I don't think people were ready to listen anyway, because they were so shell-shocked at me leaving.

What did you learn about yourself during the years away from Maiden?
I actually learnt a lot more about other people. The one thing that happens when you're in a big, powerful rock band – as in, powerful in the media – is that you have all kinds of people who will protect you; all kinds of people who will hide bad reviews from you or make sure you don't see that paper because it didn't say nice things about you. I don't think that's very helpful. But when you leave the fold and you're suddenly on your own, outside the protective pentagram, you see all these people queuing up to give you a good kicking, because they couldn't when you were in Maiden. And you think: "*Really*? Wow."

Did the negative reviews bother you?
I was quite sensitive to reviews, especially if I thought they weren't being fair. At the same time, I was never afraid of a critical review if it was honest and laid out reasons why.

When Blaze Bayley replaced you in Maiden, you sent him two bricks painted yellow.
I saw an interview with him, and there was a line at the end where he said: "I feel like Dorothy in *The Wizard Of Oz*." I thought: "That's really sweet. I know exactly how you feel." So I painted two bricks and sent them to him.

Did you ever see Maiden with Blaze singing?
No. It was all a little bit fraught. The only time I've actually listened to the albums was when Steve [Harris] said: "We need to go and record one of these songs." I thought: "Oh, how does it go, then? I'd better go and have a listen to it."

Blaze gave it his best shot.
He did. Absolutely. Hats off. Full-on respect to him for that. His voice is very different to mine, and there was a point when he got the job where I thought: "How the hell is he going to manage to do those songs? Maybe they just won't do them."

I said to someone at the time: "Why don't they really do something off the wall and really outrageous? Get a woman! There's some of these female Finnish vocalists kicking around, and they've got the most outrageous voices! Do something to really, really knock people's socks

Aces high: Dickinson piloting Maiden's private plane on tour.

off." But I'd have been fucked then. I'd never have come back.

Dickinson did return to Maiden, of course, in 1999, helping to usher in a period of success that outstripped even that of the band's 80s heyday. Since then he has diverted his energies into other areas, including flying (he's a qualified commercial airline pilot, and famously piloted Maiden's Ed Force One plane on several tours) and beer-making (he had hands-on involvement in launching Maiden's signature Trooper beer). Even a potentially life-threatening diagnosis with head and neck cancer in 2014 was seen off with a characteristic combativeness.

You steer clear of politics in the book. You've tried a lot of other things, but have you ever thought of running for office?
[Emphatically] No, no, no, no, no, It's madness. No. I've got quite a few friends who are actually MPs of all shapes and sizes. And I've had my fair share of dealings with government agencies from the aviation side of things. And the one thing I've realised is that if you want to get anything done, don't be a politician. It's the civil servants who run the politicians, as they quickly realise when they get into office.

We stand more chance of helping people out in Maiden by brewing beer and creating jobs, or taking a hundred and fifty people out on the road with us and giving them all jobs. We do a huge amount with Maiden.

How did your cancer diagnosis change your view of death?
I'm a bit more philosophical about it now. Although I wasn't at any stage… how can I put it… near death, I could certainly see it in the rear-view mirror. Death doesn't really cross your mind much, unless someone has an accident or falls under a bus. As human beings we brush it off, especially if you're at a relatively young age, full of piss and vinegar, running around like a lunatic. And then all of a sudden in comes Mr Death with his scythe, pointing and saying: "I have come for you." And you go: "Oh fuck. Really? I've got things to do." So suddenly you find yourself really getting on with that, living your life that bit more, doing the things you've got to do. I find I have less time for people who want to waste my time.

> "FENCING IS CATHARTIC. YOU GET OUT THERE, HAVE A YELL AND A SCREAM BUT NOBODY DIES."

So what does the future hold?
Maiden are having a bit of a rest. We've a lot of things going on at the moment, but nothing I can discuss in detail right now. There's half a solo album sitting in LA too. I'd love to go and finish it.

The other thing is, let's see how the book goes, because I really enjoyed writing it. I wrote 180,000 words and obviously there was a bit of tweaking, and we had to take out big chunks for space. There's about two-thirds of a book on the cutting-room floor. I couldn't do another autobiography because I've already done one of those. But who knows, it could possibly turn into something else.

GOING IT ALONE

The pick of Dickinson's solo songs.

DRACULA

Neither one of his greatest songs nor even really a solo number, this creaky slice of Hammer Horror heavy metal by long-forgotten London band Shots warrants inclusion as Dickinson's very first recording. A curio, but one that pointed to greater things.

SON OF A GUN

The Dickinson solo career got off to a flying start with the glorious opening track of his debut solo album, *Tattooed Millionaire*. A brooding takedown of religious imperialism, it's one of the finest things he's written, with or without Maiden.

TATTOOED MILLIONAIRE

The album itself was a stylistic grab-bag, but *Tattooed Millionaire*'s title track was a brash pop-metal gem with shades of Def Leppard's *Photograph*. Who was it about? Our money's on Nikki Sixx…

TEARS OF THE DRAGON

Dickinson's first post-Maiden album, 1994's *Balls To Picasso*, was directionless and unmemorable, but it did produce this belter, featuring probably his best vocal performance since Maiden's *Hallowed Be Thy Name*.

OCTAVIA

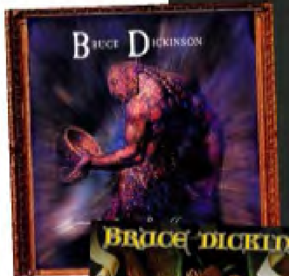
1996's *Skunkworks* was the sound of a man trying to reinvent himself for the modern era. It largely fell flat, but it threw up a few lost treasures, including this mini-classic.

ROAD TO HELL

Dickinson's reunion with Adrian Smith on 1997's *Accident Of Birth* found him reconnecting with classic heavy metal and brought Iron Maiden's greatest songwriting team back together. With this galloping anthem, they wrote the best Maiden single of the 1990s.

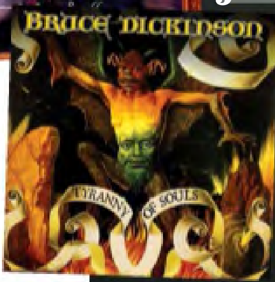
MAN OF SORROWS

Dickinson doesn't do ballads, but when it comes to stately epics, few can touch him, as this Aleister Crowley-inspired slow-burner from *Accident Of Birth* proves.



THE CHEMICAL WEDDING

1998's *The Chemical Wedding* was inspired by painter, poet and visionary William Blake, and the soaring title track flew on the wings of the angels Blake once visualised.



JERUSALEM

Blake's iconic poem (and English rugby anthem) was the song Dickinson was born to sing. In his hands, it's turned into something new: part mystical treatise, part Celtic metal drinking anthem.

NAVIGATE THE SEAS OF THE SUN

Bruce's feet were back under the Maiden table by the time of 2005's *Tyranny Of Souls*, but he'd kept some classic tunes for himself, including this slice of part-acoustic, psychedelically tinged interstellar brilliance that sounded like nothing he'd written before.

How do you top a double album and touring the world on your own jumbo jet? If you're **Iron Maiden**, you put together the Legacy Of The Beast tour, the single biggest spectacle of your entire career. Welcome to…

THE GREATE SHOW

ST ON EARTH

WORDS: MERLIN ALDERSLADE • PICTURES: JOHN McMURTRIE

Janick engages the crowd in a knees-up

Bruce delights in his costume changes, now with all the frills

"A Spitfire, for Christ's sake." Adrian Smith shoots a bemused smirk at the ceiling as the reality of the words coming out of his mouth hit him, quite possibly for the very first time. He pauses a moment before looking back at *Hammer* and saying it again: "A *Spitfire*."

Today, we join Iron Maiden's no-nonsense guitarist alongside two of his bandmates on a sunny Friday afternoon, locked in the bowels of Stockholm's impressive, 40,000-capacity Tele2 Arena. Most weeks the stadium is used as the home ground of Swedish top flight football teams Hammarby and Djurgårdens. Today, though, its purpose is just a little different. In just a short while, the Tele2 will be playing host to what has been widely and loudly described as one of the single biggest shows in heavy metal history. Iron Maiden rarely do things by halves, but even by their standards, this is – pun very much intended – a different beast entirely.

As Killswitch Engage kick off their support slot somewhere above us, Adrian, forever-beaming fellow axeman Dave Murray and bassist/Band General Steve Harris, are taking some time to reflect on the early stages of what is proving to be something of an historic tour for the metal legends. On the face of it, the 'Legacy Of The Beast' moniker seemed to suggest little more than another Greatest Hits jaunt – a chance to return some standard Maiden classics to the set after two years plugging new material. Except, that isn't how it's quite panned out.

"We've pushed our boundaries," says Steve with a sly grin. "We've made things bigger, we've made things better. It's a bit ambitious. Anything could go wrong. It could all go a bit *Spinal Tap*!"

"The show was even a surprise to me," adds Dave. "There's more going on in this set than we've had for a very long time. I had seen some photos in pre-production, but when you actually see it properly… holy shit. It's *amazing*."

By now, unless you've not heard of something called The Internet, or are simply a spoiler-dodging pro (if it's the latter, stop reading), you'll have already heard tales and seen select snippets from Maiden's latest stage spectacular. For starters, there's a brand new, big-ass Eddie, made especially for the tour. There's more pyro and fire than they've had in years. There are moments where the entire look of the set itself undergoes a dramatic makeover. There's also an abundance of extra props and costume changes, pretty much for every song of the entire set – and that's just for Bruce Dickinson (more on that later). Oh, and then there's that bloody plane. A lifesize Spitfire replica, spinning propellers and all, hovering over the opening part of the set as the band steam through *Aces High*. It really isn't an exaggeration to say that this is likely the biggest show Iron Maiden have ever done. Bigger than Book Of Souls. Bigger than Powerslave. Bigger, even, than 2008's legendary Somewhere Back In Time.

"When I first saw the set I thought, 'Jesus, this is a bit of a handful', you know?" admits Adrian, who remains typically perplexed by the whole thing. "It's pretty incredible. But then, our music's always been dramatic and crying out for production, right from the days of *Phantom Of The Opera, Iron Maiden* and all that. So as long as it doesn't interfere with my amp, they can do what they like. Although in the run-through I did get a bit too close to Bruce's flame gun…"

"JESUS, THIS IS A HANDFUL"

ADRIAN REMEMBERS THE FIRST TIME HE SAW THE NEW STAGE SHOW

The new Ed Force One was smaller than planned…

Wait, there's a flame gun?

"Yeah, that's right," chuckles Dave, a man who seems to have never been in a bad mood in his entire life. "We have to keep on our toes a little bit. Bruce is playing with fire now, so you don't want to get in his way. He also came up with some great ideas for his costumes, too, and other little moody things here and there. He's having a blast."

Indeed, the more that we find out about (and, eventually, see of) the show, the more it seems that the frontman's knack for being a bit of a show-off is in full effect. While the guys don't want to spoil Bruce's full involvement before we see it for ourselves, they do all allude to the singer having filled his wardrobe with new

The Maiden family

Steve Harris strikes his oh-so-familiar pose

oddities, apparently spending an inordinate amount of time in, as Steve puts it, "some weird shops".

"He's put so much into the show," adds the bassist. "It's fun, it's atmospheric, it's drama, it's theatre and he loves it. It's great to see him that excited."

Being excited is one thing, but for a band who have so little to prove, it speaks of Maiden's ambition that they'd decide that now, in between album cycles, is the time to ramp up their show more than ever. With no new record to plug, it's a serious statement of intent: when Maiden come to town, you pay attention.

"It is a statement," agrees Steve, matter-of-factly. "We've had to spend more money for this, but when you want to make things bigger and better, it costs more. I suppose there could be something we try one day where we're like, 'Oh my god, what have we done here?', but you have to be ambitious. Plus, you can have all these ideas, but to get them to actually work is another thing."

Is it safe to say that we can probably guess whose idea the Spitfire was, at least?

"Obviously, Bruce was the one who chose the plane," laughs Steve. "And that was fairly ambitious, especially being in the opening song! A lot of people would have just done that at the end. But again, it's a statement. We're coming out with that. And maybe we can't really better it later on, but it's an eye-opener."

The new stage set is flaming awesome

Dave and Adrian: dynamic duo

"PEOPLE HAVE GOT TO PUSH THE BOUNDARIES"

STEVE SAYS BANDS NEED TO TAKE RISKS TO MAKE IT

Spitfires, flamethrowers, set changes, costume changes *and* brand new Eddies are reason enough to be excited about a new Maiden show, and yet, true to form, they still had some other surprises up their sleeves. When Legacy Of The Beast officially took off at the tour's first show in Tallinn, Estonia, on May 26, Maiden also unveiled their new setlist, song-by-song (and prop by prop), on Instagram. *Aces High* kicking things off is never a bad shout – has a better set-opener ever been written? – but it was what followed that *really* got the Internet losing its shit. Put plainly: this is one of the most surprising, varied, rarities-filled sets the buggers have ever put together. You can usually expect at least one sparsely played cut to make a reappearance in any given Maiden tour, and dropping *Where Eagles Dare* for the first time since 2005 would be enough to tick that box.

But that's just the start of it. *The Wicker Man* makes a welcome return after the better part of a decade on the bench. There's also not one, but *two* prime cuts from the Blaze Bayley era: *The X Factor* epic *Sign Of The Cross* and *Virtual XI*'s *The Clansman*. There's a surprising dip into 2006's vastly undervalued *A Matter Of Life And Death*, courtesy of *For The Greater Good Of God*. Want more? How about a song they haven't played in more than 30 years? Hello, *Flight Of Icarus*. Sandwich all that between iron-clad Hall Of Famers like *2 Minutes To Midnight, The Evil That Men Do, Hallowed Be Thy Name* and *Run To The Hills* and you have a veritable smorgasbord of heavy metal history.

"It's a good set," allows Steve. "Bruce chose most of it, actually. Normally it's me and him that choose it together, but this time he pretty much

Seriously, who the hell deemed it a good idea to give Bruce flamethrowers?!

Nicko: a man who clearly loves his work

"THIS BAND IS A LIFESTYLE"

Killswitch Engage guitarist Adam D reveals what it's like to be on the road with Iron Maiden

KILLSWITCH WERE PICKED TO SUPPORT MAIDEN ON THIS TOUR. DID YOU EVER THINK YOU'D HEAR THAT SENTENCE?
"Of course not. This band is like a lifestyle, one of the biggest metal acts out there, so to be a part of it is incredible. Here we are: just this stupid hardcore-metal band from the North East, and now we're opening for Iron Maiden. That's pretty insane, man. We can tell our grandchildren that we did this."

WHAT'S IT LIKE BEING ON TOUR WITH MAIDEN, THEN?
"The shocking thing was how incredibly pleasant everyone is, right from day one. It's a well-oiled machine, a group of very nice individuals. Even Bruce stopped in the first day just to say hi. We were like, 'You don't need to fucking do that!'"

HAVE YOU HUNG OUT WITH ANY OF THE OTHER MAIDEN GUYS?
"Yeah, I've chatted with Steve a bit, and Nicko [McBrain, drums] came in on the first day as well. Everybody's so chilled, it's awesome! You never know what to expect with people; everybody's different, so it's refreshing to see that they're all lovely individuals."

HOW HAVE MAIDEN'S CROWDS TAKEN TO YOU SO FAR?
"It's exactly what I expected. There are a couple of sour faces down in the front, people who are like, 'Will you hurry the fuck up? I wanna see Maiden!' But there's been a few nights where there are pockets of people that are happy to see us, so that makes all the difference. Also, playing *Holy Diver* is our one sweet move at the end to win them over. It's like, 'Hey, we enjoy classic metal as well!'"

NOW THAT YOU'VE SEEN ALL THIS UP CLOSE, ARE YOU TEMPTED TO ADD SOME PYRO AND PROPS TO A KILLSWITCH SHOW?
"I would love it! Unfortunately, our wallets would not. Ha ha ha! We'd probably owe money at the end of the tour if we started doing shit like Maiden do…"

chose it all. It's an interesting set to play, and it's important for us to go out there and feel fresh and not like we're going through the motions. It's a good balance of songs, and hopefully it's interesting for the audience."

Judging by the reactions so far, it's probably fairly safe to say that Maiden's audience are very much into it.

"I think Bruce made some great choices," agrees Dave. "It showcases different eras, and we were really able to explore a lot of dynamics in these songs that transfer over to the best production we've ever put out there. I just love being able to play *Flight Of Icarus* again. It's short and sweet, and the piece of production that goes with that is pretty incredible."

"God, I can't remember the last time I'd played *Flight Of Icarus*," adds Adrian. "But it's great. It's a good live song, so it's nice to have that in there. And there's *Clansman*, with the *'Freedoooom!'* and all that. *Sign Of The Cross*…"

"And then there's *For The Greater Good Of God*, that's a beautiful song to play," chimes in Dave. "I love playing every single one of them. Some of them are challenging, and some of them you can just go for it, but I love them."

It's nice that Maiden are as excited to be playing these songs again as fans are to be hearing them.

"THIS IS THE BEST PRODUCTION WE'VE EVER DONE"

DAVE HAS SEEN 'EM ALL, SO HE'D KNOW

The fact that Bruce wanted two Blaze-era tracks in the set – songs which clock up a hefty 20 minutes between them – is also a reminder that it's still possible for ego to be left at the door when it's in the name of putting on a kickass show.

"People go on about the 'Blaze era' and Bruce doing those songs, but if we do anything from the first two albums, Bruce isn't on those either, and I don't really see that there's that much difference," replies Steve, a little wearied by people treating the Blaze albums like an oddity in the band's canon. "It's all part of Iron Maiden, and he's got a good attitude towards that. He's never forcing my hand. Anyway, these days, we get right to the end of each tour and Bruce is already talking about the set he wants to do on the next one! We're like, 'Bloody hell.' You can't knock that enthusiasm."

With spirits in the fold at an all-time high, it's probably an easy bet that a new album will be in Maiden's sights somewhere down the line. That said, the 21st century has seen increasingly long periods between new records, with five long years passing between *The Final Frontier* and 2015's *The Book Of Souls*. With the latter now approaching three years in the can, is it safe to say that we shouldn't be waiting for album number 17(!) quite yet?

"Yeah, it'll be a while," admits Steve. "We've got this cycle going on. I'm pretty damn sure we will do another album, and then all well and good, we'll go out on tour to back that up. How long that will go on for, I don't know. We've been talking about this kind of thing for the last 20 years, but as time goes on, it becomes more of a reality that one day we may not be able to tour any more. But I don't want to think about that. You've got to enjoy the moment."

Then let's talk about the moment: are there ideas coming together for the next album, at least?

"Oh, I get ideas all the time. I couldn't use them all in three lifetimes, it's ridiculous. I'm really lucky that it's never dried up."

"There are different hats you put on," adds Dave. "There's the studio hat, the gig hat, and the putting- a-few-ideas-together hat. So there's a lot of hats in this band. And a lot of heads to put them on, ha ha ha! But writing is always there, in the background."

For Adrian, being out on the road and in front of a live crowd can be one of the most inspirational experiences a songwriter can have, and he's already finding that this tour is no exception.

"There's this crackle of energy," he smiles. "Because you're close to the essence of it; you're in the same building as the audience, so there's this energy that you can just feed off of. You just pick it up. Quite often it'll be just before, when I'm sitting in the tune-up room messing about. I'll get my phone out and get a few ideas down. Being on the road definitely does inspire stuff. It's great."

With Maiden's music getting more progressively ambitious with each passing album – *The Book Of Souls* boasting three songs that smashed through the 10-minute mark – is there ever a temptation to just smash out 10 four-minute quickies and be ➤

done with it?

"No, I don't think so," shrugs Adrian. "I can't see us doing that."

"Yeah, that would be an easy option," chuckles Dave. "But we don't like to take the easier way out!"

"Writing longer songs is not really intentional," insists Steve. "I don't know why that's happening, to be honest! Could I write a four- or five-minute song? Maybe that's a challenge I need to set myself..."

Challenges, it appears, are something Iron Maiden still thrive on. Whether it's the scope of their music, the sheer scale of their tours or the grandeur of the shows themselves, they continue to press forward, finding new ways to push themselves onwards and upwards and carving out

"WE'RE MAKING A STATEMENT"

STEVE ISN'T CONTENT TO LET MAIDEN GO THROUGH THE MOTIONS

fresh cornerstones of a legacy that still, inexplicably, shows little sign of drying up. Spectacles like theirs are something of a rarity in today's metal scene, the likes of Avenged, Slipknot and, most recently, Parkway Drive serving as the few examples of modern metal bands able to curate live shows truly fit to fill arenas. As the man who has led Maiden to where they are today, does Steve see a future for metal on the grand stage?

"Blimey, it's taken us long enough to do a show like this one!" he exhales. "It's not easy these days, especially for new bands. It's harder than ever to make a crust out of this. It's different for us, because we've taken a long, long time to build up to this kind of level, but some bands will never even get to this level, or *any* level. They don't get out of the pubs."

So how does a metal band get out of the pub in 2018?

"People have just got to push the boundaries and try and edge it up," Steve replies, simply. "I mean, we've never had songs that lend themselves to radio play. We've worked really hard for where we are."

And with that, one half of Iron Maiden take their leave to rejoin their bandmates and get ready for tonight's show. And oh, yes, what a show it is. Even before the damn thing kicks off there are small, fun extra details going on: roadies dressed in army uniforms roaming the stage, making minor adjustments, interacting with fans and offering a small hint at how the stage itself is going to look (well, for the first part of the show at least).

Sure enough, after UFO's *Doctor Doctor* blares through the arena and Winston Churchill's famous speech has finished booming over the speakers, the curtain drops, off go the first of today's many fireworks and out comes that bloody plane, propellers and all, as Maiden launch into a rip-roaring *Aces High* and 40,000 Swedes proceed to lose the plot. Is Bruce Dickinson bounding onstage in a Biggles-esque pilot cap one of the most ludicrous things we've ever seen? Yes, yes it is. Is it brilliant? Obviously. Don't be stupid.

What follows really is something that needs to be seen to be believed, even by the most well-weathered Maiden fanatic. Barely five minutes go by without something popping up worthy of an 'oooh' or an 'aaaah', and almost every ➤

Eddie, you look different. Have you had work done?

Janick in rare 'standing-still' shocker

Iron Maiden don't *do* understated

It's Trooper time! Amon Amarth hanging out with Maiden manager Rod Smallwood

single song of the set has something unique to accompany it. Flaming torches and stone gargoyles (*The Number Of The Beast*), a noose-wiedling frontman (*Hallowed…*), a light-up cross (*Sign Of The Cross*, obviously), a huge, winged statue and Bruce-powered flamethrowers (*Icarus*) and the new Big Eddie, who is easily the most demonic, metal-as-fuck-looking one they've ever done. And that's *before* you get to the fancy dress escapades of a certain singer. One minute a pilot, the next a swashbuckling swordsman, soon after that a sinister, lantern-waving Victorian dandy. This isn't just the Greatest Maiden Show Ever™ – it's the Bruce Dickinson Special, and he's loving every minute of it. Even the set itself evolves, jumping from a war-torn battlefield to a stunning, stained glass chapel to the smoking pits of hell as the show goes on.

The returning songs, too, absolutely bang from start to finish. The *'Freedooooom!'*s in *The Clansman* are nothing less than spinetingling. *Flight Of Icarus* sounds humongous, too, and both *For The Greater Good Of God* and *Sign Of The Cross* carry real, emotional gravitas in the flesh, even if it's obvious it's taking a little more concentration than usual to nail them this early in the tour. By the time a rip-roaring *Run To The Hills* brings the set to a close,Bruce galloping around the stage like a kidon a hobby horse, you really do wish you could do it all over again. This show is a love letter to Iron Maiden fans, hand-delivered by the band themselves. Legacy Of The Beast's UK leg kicks off later this month; this is your official warning to do anything you can to get a ticket. You won't regret it.

"I never predicted that I'd end up playing guitar under a Spitfire plane," beams Dave Murray as the band come offstage, ready to do it all over again in a couple days' time. We can fully believe that, David. Where can you go from this?!

"There's always things to do," cuts in Steve, unflappable as ever. "When you get to my age, there's always going to be a bucket list. There are things that are personal, there's things with the band. There's countries we still haven't played yet! There's a lot we can still do. After two or three months off, I always start getting itchy feet…"

We can only imagine what the hell they're going to come up with next.

THE FIRE AND THE FURY

WE DISSECT THE MOST EPIC MAIDEN SHOW EVER

THE STAGE(S)

First unveiled as a fog-ridden, smokey battlefield covered in army-grade camouflage netting, the stage evolves as the show goes on – first into a luscious, stained-glass chapel, and then an ancient, demonic vision of Hell. Lovely.

THE PLANE

The first and, arguably, biggest new addition to the Maiden set. Coming flying out of the back of the set and swerving over the stage for *Aces High*, this is one you really have to see to believe. Dave insists it's "so big you can get in it".

THE PYRO

Seriously, there's enough fire and sparks going on here to make Rammstein look twice. Stand too close to this Maiden set and we promise you there will be singed eyebrows come bedtime.

THE NOOSE

Brought onstage by Bruce during *Hallowed Be Thy Name* (when else?), this delightfully cheerful little prop is so at home in the Maiden set it's a wonder it hasn't made more appearances over the years.

THE TROOPER EDDIE

Arguably the most iconic Eddie of all makes a reappearance in the song of the same name, and he's looking particularly grim and battle-trodden this time around. He still likes a good swear, though. The cheeky fucker.

THE CROSS

One of Bruce's more cumbersome props, it looks pretty damn badass as it lights up while he stalks the stage with it during set highlight *Sign Of The Cross*.

THE ICARUS STATUE

Maybe the coolest extra detail in the whole set. A towering, winged figure straight out of Greek mythology looms over the band as they fly through *Flight Of Icarus*. Though it's very much in danger throughout the song thanks to a marauding Mr Dickinson, who happens to be packing…

THE FLAMETHROWERS

Yup, you heard right. Someone decided to greenlight the idea to let Bruce Dickinson bound around onstage with two giant flamethrowers attached to his person. Well, we did say they'd gone Full Rammstein with this one…

THE BIG EDDIE

Best Eddie Ever? It's got some stiff competition, but our favourite definitely-not-a-zombie-mascot has been given such an extreme, satanic makeover that he's almost unrecognisable. It's easily the most metal Eddie ever, and it looks immense in the flesh.

THE COSTUMES

Honestly, start a drinking game based around every time Bruce has a costume change and you'll be bladdered by halfway in. We won't spoil them all, but our favourite is his rather excellent, top-hatted *Fear Of The Dark* set-up. Spooky.

Bruce gets sinister for *Sign Of The Cross*

For the stories behind the best albums and the bands that produced them...

PROG

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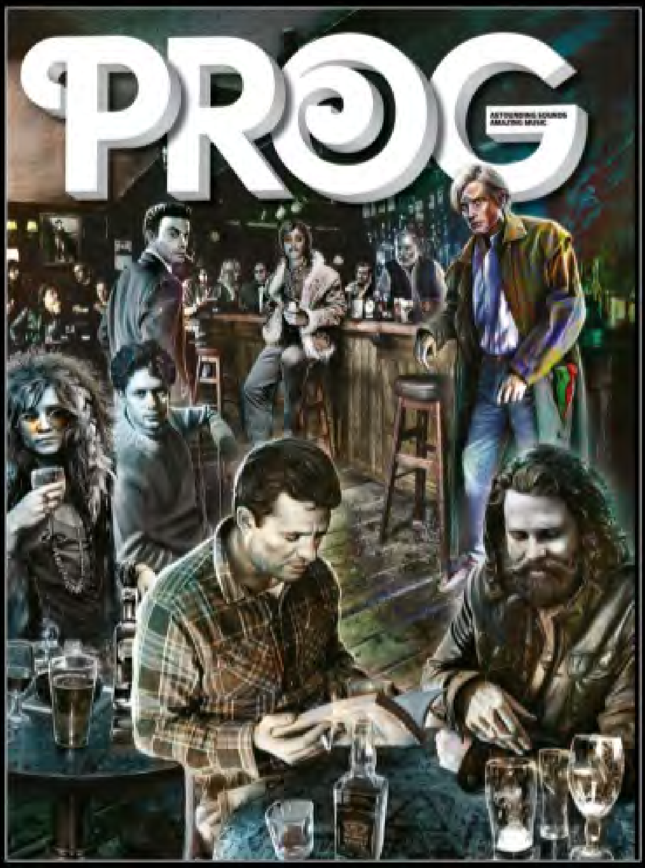

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The Book Of Eddie

With their acclaimed **Legacy Of The Beast** comic series, Iron Maiden and manager Rod Smallwood have taken Eddie from album sleeves and stage sets onto the printed page. This is how they did it…

Words: **Dave Everley**

Name the most iconic figure in metal. There's only one answer: Eddie. Iron Maiden's deathless mascot has been with them since the beginning, the only person – and we use that word loosely – to appear on every single one of the band's albums alongside Steve Harris and Dave Murray.

In recent years, this eternal icon has made the jump from covers, stage sets and videos into other realms. In 2016, he became the central figure in the acclaimed mobile game *Legacy Of The Beast*, which let players to take on the role of Eddie as he battled across across ancient worlds and alien dimensions to recover the shards of his soul.

The success of the game has led on to a comic series of the same name. Conceived by Maiden manager Rod Smallwood and Phantom Music creative director Llexi Leon and launched in November 2017, this epic story transforms the overarching plot of the game into a vivid and ambitious narrative that spans several universes.

"Eddie is this incredible cosmic entity, and essentially he's ambushed in deep space and his soul is shattered across the galaxy," explains Llexi Leon of the premise behind the comic. "All the different Eddies – be it The ▷

Trooper or the tank commander from *A Matter Of Life And Death* – are different aspects of this character. And so the prime Eddie has to go on a journey to fin out who attacked him , and reclaim the lost shards of his soul and ultimately face the Beast and even greater powers that lurk behind the ultimate evil."

Like the game, the comic book ties into the rich mythology of Eddie that has been constructed over the last 40 years. "A huge amount of exploratory work was done with Rod and the band for the game," says Llexi. "And the game is fantastic, but when you're playing on a four inch screen, you don't get into the meat of the story. So we decided to make a comic series out of the narrative."

The diligence which defines everything that Maiden put their name to is evident. "Rod has a very clear vision of what Eddie's all about. A lot of the questions about what's tonally appropriate, what Eddie's motivations are, all that stuff, comes from Rod: 'Why would Eddie do that?' From that you can build this universe around him."

Llexi himself devised the treatment for the story, working with acclaimed comic book writer Ian Edginton and artist Kevin West to turn it from concept into reality. "Ian has done *Batman, Judge Dredd, 2000AD* – he's a legend," enthuses Llexi. "But the fact that he's British lends a certain voicing to the work and of course he understands the worlds and concepts of Iron Maiden. The characters had to have a more British sensibility than a typical superhero book. That was important to me."

Of course, there's the small matter that Eddie doesn't actually say anything – presumably a huge challenge when he's the focal point of the story.

"Oh, it's definitely a challenge," laughs Llexi. "Rod is very passionate about the fact that Eddie doesn't talk – he's all attitude, he speaks with his actions. But he's more like a primal force of nature – he's not just some undead zombie. There's something more to it than the supernatural – it becomes more than just about his place in the universe."

Each chapter of the comic takes Eddie to a different world, which tie in to different Maiden albums or songs – the Kingdom Of The Sands was inspired by 1984's *Powerslave*, while Battlefield brings the martial atmosphere of 2006's *A Matter Of Life And Death* to life. His journeys also see him encountering characters from Maiden songs. including The Clairvoyant and The Beast. The latter is the series' Big Bad.

"If Eddie is this primal force of free will, than the Beast is very authoritarian, almost Nazi-like evil," says Llexi. "That gives you a lot to work with in terms of their motivation. The fun thing is that Eddie's unpredictable. Even if he's out-manned and out-gunned, he never gives up."

The first five issues of Legacy Of The Beast were collected in graphic novel form in October 2018, while the next five issues continue the story with Vol.2, which is out now. Llexi says there are plans for a third volume to complete the story.

"The plan is for a three-volume story, which will be circa 450 pages, then we'll see where we go from there. No one's ever done anything like this in music, which is where an entirely new universe has been created from such an amazing body of work as Iron Maiden's. We've been able to dig deep into the whole thing - it's not just the hits or the obvious stuff. For Maiden fans, there's a lot to appreciate."

Eat your heart out Superman: scenes from Iron Maiden's Legacy Of The Beast comic series.

THE 50 GREATEST MAIDEN SONGS EVER

Few bands have such an iconic back catalogue as Iron Maiden. So, picked by a panel of bands, readers, *Metal Hammer* staff and Steve Harris himself, we are officially counting down the 50 greatest Maiden songs of all time. No era is off-limits. No song is ineligible. By Maiden fans. For Maiden fans. Let's get to it...

50. EMPIRE OF THE CLOUDS
(THE BOOK OF SOULS, 2015)

As if writing a concept track about the doomed R101 airship wasn't grand enough, Bruce Dickinson also opted to make this epic closer from 2015's double-album Maiden's longest song *ever*. Clocking in at 18 minutes, it's a triumphant, progressive masterpiece.

49. BE QUICK OR BE DEAD
(FEAR OF THE DARK, 1992)

The opening track to Maiden's most underrated album is an absolute ripper, coming screaming out of the gates with a snapping riff straddled by Bruce wailing away like a banshee with her tits caught in a car door.

48. MAN ON THE EDGE
(THE X FACTOR, 1995)

There are some absolute gems hidden away in the Blaze Bayley albums, not least this pacy, urgent and claustrophobic single from the icons' 10th studio album. Based on the Michael Douglas-goes-batshit classic *Falling Down*, it showed they still had fangs.

47. ALEXANDER THE GREAT
(SOMEWHERE IN TIME, 1986)

Nicko has remarked that he'd like the band to play this live one day – and you can hear why. Built around a suitably brooding and militaristic drumbeat that leads into a stirring chorus, *ATG* also manages to make 'Macedonia' sound metal.

46. MONTSÉGUR
(DANCE OF DEATH, 2003)

How this 100%, iron-clad rager got left off the *Dance Of Death*-era setlists we'll never know. A thunderous, battle-ready banger, *Montségur* is the fastest track Maiden have penned since Bruce's return – and it absolutely crushes.

45. TAILGUNNER
(NO PRAYER FOR THE DYING, 1990)

A highlight of Maiden's no-strings-attached but generally misfiring *No Prayer For The Dying* opus, *Tailgunner* is a simplistic, fun and pacy spiritual soulmate to *Aces High*. Admit it, you're air-machine-gunning as you read this.

BAND PICK!

44. WHERE EAGLES DARE
(PIECE OF MIND, 1983)

"The first Maiden song I ever heard. I bought *Piece Of Mind*, and when *Where Eagles Dare* came in, it just hooked me. That drum fill alone was more than enough. What an album opener!"
BRANN DAILOR, MASTODON

43. SIGN OF THE CROSS
(THE X FACTOR, 1995)

How would Maiden officially kick off the Blaze era following Bruce's departure? With a dark and lumbering 11-minute monster, that's how. Rolling along on a sinister, rumbling bassline, it gets bonus metal points for those sweet sinister monk chants.

GETTY

Maiden at 1992's Monsters Of Rock, which they were headlining for the second time

HAMMER PICK!

42. THE LONGEST DAY
(A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, 2006)

"Lots of Maiden songs gives me goosebumps, but the first time I heard this gem from *A Matter Of Life And Death*, I nearly fell off my chair. Best played at excruciating volume, it's a dark and devastating paean to the horrors of D-Day."
DOM LAWSON, STAFF WRITER

41. COMING HOME
(THE FINAL FRONTIER, 2010)

One of Maiden's most earnest and uplifting tracks ever, *Coming Home* perfectly encapsulates the feeling of touching back down on home turf after a long time away. The ultimate, lighters-up, arms-loft heavy metal anthem.

40. SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON
(SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON, 1988)

The title track of Maiden's seventh (of course!) wove together all its musical and lyrical strands in nearly 10 head-spinning minutes of prog metal glory. Of course, its batshit central concept didn't actually make much, y'know, sense but that wasn't the part. This was the sound of Maiden laying the groundwork for the path they would follow in the 00s.

39. STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

(SOMEWHERE IN TIME, 1986)

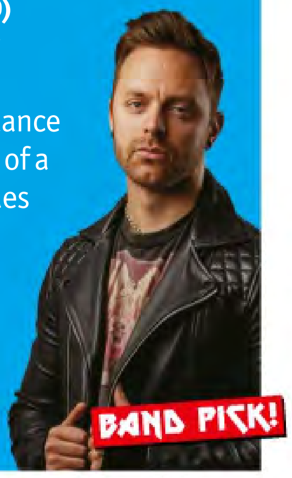
The sleeve of the second of the two Adrian Smith-written singles from Somewhere In Time might have nodded to The Good, The Bad And The Ugly, but the track itself was pure Maiden: a thundering tale of arctic exploration and death that took its title from Robert A Heinlen's sci-fi classic.

38. BRING YOUR DAUGHTER... TO THE SLAUGHTER

(NO PRAYER FOR THE DYING, 1990)

"It was the first Maiden song I heard, when they played it on *Top Of The Pops*. Pop and dance was big at that point, and all of a sudden there were these dudes with guitars and super-long hair, yelling about slaughtering daughters. It was pretty eye-opening!"

MATT TUCK, BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE



BAND PICK!

37. FLIGHT OF ICARUS

(PIECE OF MIND, 1983)

"It gives me goosebumps. There are maybe 10 songs that you hear in your whole life that when you hear the intro, you just think, 'What the fuck is *this*?!' That was *Flight Of Icarus* for me."

JOAKIM BRODÉN, SABATON

36. HEAVEN CAN WAIT

(SOMEWHERE IN TIME, 1986)

A particular highlight of Maiden's synth-straddling '86 knockout, *Heaven Can Wait* switches up pace and tone so much over seven breathless minutes that it's hard to keep up. Plus, dem woahs halfway through… yeah, you know the ones.

35. WHEN THE WILD WIND BLOWS

(THE FINAL FRONTIER, 2010)

Consolidating the fact that Maiden were taking an increasingly latitudinous approach to their songwriting in this most fruitful of second golden ages, *When The Wild Wind Blows* is a gorgeous, meandering denouement to an album absolutely stacked with great ideas.

34. THE CLAIRVOYANT

(SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON, 1988)

Practically bursting at the seams with outlandish mischief, *The Clairvoyant* glides along a gleaming, multilayered verse before melting into a thunderous, 4/4 chorus that was tailor-made for pogoing festival crowds. Also featuring Bruce Dickinson at his prophetic best.

33. REVELATIONS

(PIECE OF MIND, 1983)

An understated but beautifully orchestrated number, *Revelations* is built on a determined, plodding riff sprinkled with lurid imagery and impacted by a curiously melancholic midsection. Truly, a song fit to present to the Gods themselves.

32. NO MORE LIES

(DANCE OF DEATH, 2003)

While *Dance Of Death* was a little top-heavy, when it slammed, it slammed hard, and rarely more than with this anthemic ditty. A live staple for the tour that followed, *No More Lies* has held up as one of Maiden's finest modern songs.

31. PROWLER

(IRON MAIDEN, 1980)

The song that started it all. A frantic, punked-up screamer, *Prowler* briefly dabbles in the kind of twin harmonic gorgeousness and guitar-duelling fun and games that came to signify Maiden's career, but is fundamentally all about speed and precision. A bullseye.

30. GHOST OF THE NAVIGATOR

(BRAVE NEW WORLD, 2000)

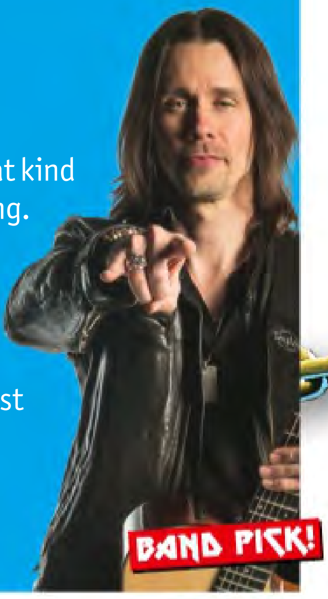
A spooky, nautical voyage from Maiden's unstoppable comeback album with Bruce back in the fold, this is Maiden at their eeriest, with lyrics fit to fill a horror novel wrapped in a tense, pounding riff. Worth getting your swimmies on for.

29. RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER

(POWERSLAVE, 1984)

"…*Ancient Mariner* is so epic! It's that breakdown section in the middle, that kind of cool bass arpeggio thing. It's very eerie and mysterious, and then the way it builds up… it's just *massive* when it finally hits you again. I just love that approach to songwriting."

MYLES KENNEDY, ALTER BRIDGE



28. KILLERS
(KILLERS, 1981)

For Maiden connoisseurs, the Killers album is the band's cult classic, with a dark and heavy vibe typified by its sinister title track. Its visions of brutal murder, and Di'Anno's chilling screams, make it a truly nasty piece of work.

HAMMER PICK!

27. MOONCHILD
(SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON, 1988)

"Loosely based on the Aleister Crowley novel, this occult epic bristles with primal screams and massively creepy lyrics about ritual infant murder. The perfect balance of Maiden's metal thunder and pure mysticism."

ELEANOR GOODMAN, FEATURES EDITOR

25. CHILDREN OF THE DAMNED
(THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST, 1982)

"I really love this song because it shows the sensitive side of Iron Maiden. That was their attempt t get pussy, and they pulled it off – although they probably didn't get as much as Van Halen."

MICHAEL STARR, STEEL PANTHER

BAND PICK!

26. THE CLANSMAN
(VIRTUAL XI, 1998)

There may be Maiden fans for whom 1998's *Virtual XI* was a convenient entry point into the band's world, but few would claim that it is one of the band's strongest records. But then, of course, there is *The Clansman*.

Steve Harris has often expressed his love for epic movies and cited film soundtracks as an enduring source of inspiration, so there was a certain inevitability to the news that the Blaze Bayley-fronted Maiden had recorded a song inspired by Mel Gibson's box-office triumph, *Braveheart*, the story of William Wallace, 13th-century Scottish warrior and kilt-sporting badass. The movie itself was undoubtedly overblown and historically suspect, but the essence of its message – the victory of the oppressed over their oppressors – was perfect for a heavy metal anthem.

While much of the rest of *Virtual XI* struggled to hold the attention (not least the overlong *The Angel And The Gambler*), *The Clansman* stood out as a Maiden classic, one of Blaze's finest ever vocal performances and, more importantly, firm evidence that Steve Harris was still more than capable of writing songs that could compel an entire arena full of fans to bellow along with maximum enthusiasm. When Maiden hit the road in support of *Virtual XI*, the song was greeted like an old friend, as thousands roared *"Freeeedoooooom!"* and Blaze revelled in the moment. After the singer's departure and the return of Bruce and Adrian Smith in 1999, Maiden were somewhat excused from having to perform Blaze-era songs, but *The Clansman* remained in the setlist for a good while and seemed to grow in power and allure when sung by everyone's favourite airline pilot. The definitive version of the song can be found on 2002's *Rock In Rio* live album, wherein Bruce injected fresh impetus into a song that sums up the band's never-say-die spirit. *The Clansman* also seems oddly pertinent in today's Trump-bothered world: *'It's a time wrought with fear/It's a land wrought with change/If ancestors could hear what is happening now/They would turn in their graves/They would all be ashamed/That the land of the free has been written in chains.'*

STEVE SAYS: "It's a song I really loved playing live. I'd love to do that again. It's a real rabble-rouser, I think. There's a lot of different emotions in that song and it has all that singalong stuff. It's a powerful song and a good choice!"

24. AFRAID TO SHOOT STRANGERS
(FEAR OF THE DARK, 1992)

An impassioned track detailing the plight of soldiers fed into relentless government war machines, *Afraid To Shoot Strangers* made a welcome return to their setlist in recent years.

BAND PICK!

23. MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE
(KILLERS, 1981)

"On many of the Iron Maiden shows that Mastodon was lucky enough to support, I happened to catch this song more than any other song they played. If you're a fan of guitars, it's hard not to love this song."

TROY SANDERS, MASTODON

22. INFINITE DREAMS
(SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON, 1988)

A gorgeous number from the absolutely stacked *Seventh Son…* album, *Infinite Dreams* ponders along musings of consciousness and the afterlife, bubbling away on a soft opening guitar line before reaching an almighty, urgent crescendo. Curiously, it hasn't been played for decades.

BAND PICK!

21. IF ETERNITY SHOULD FAIL
(THE BOOK OF SOULS, 2015)

"It's my favourite new Maiden song because it really brought me in on the latest record. It's adventurous – I love the vocal melodies. The way it's arranged is brilliant; it takes you on an adventure but you're never bored of it. The vocal melodies are a little out there, and I think that's cool."

M SHADOWS, AVENGED SEVENFOLD

GETTY

Bruce blowing away Madison Square Garden. "Scream for me, New York!"

20. THE WICKER MAN

(BRAVE NEW WORLD, 2000)

How do you inform the world that Bruce Dickinson and Adrian Smith's returns to the Maiden fold are a success? By launching your new album with a fucking grenade of a track. One of Maiden's all-time great opening songs.

BAND PICK!

19. RUN TO THE HILLS

(THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST, 1982)

"It's a song that I have sung many times! I can hit all of the notes in that one, but I'm not comparing myself to Bruce – I'd never do that! It's just a fucking great song, an all-time classic. I don't want people to think of me as a weirdo who picked some obscure B-side, so I'm going with one of the greatest songs ever made."

CRISTINA SCABBIA, LACUNA COIL

HAMMER PICK!

18. CAN I PLAY WITH MADNESS

(SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON, 1988)

"The first Maiden song I ever heard! The awesome video was doing the rounds on MTV and teenaged me was transfixed. Woe betide the ears of anyone standing near me when they launch into it live!"

VANESSA THORPE, PRODUCTION EDITOR

BAND PICK!

17. PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

(IRON MAIDEN, 1980)

"I first heard *Phantom Of The Opera* when that first Maiden album came out in 1980, and it was so different to anything else out there. The riffs, the arrangement, the cycles it goes through… I love it, man. It's such a unique song, it's my favourite by them."

KIRK HAMMETT, METALLICA

16. POWERSLAVE
(POWERSLAVE, 1984)

Adorned with the most spectacular artwork they had yet conceived, Iron Maiden's fifth album was an imperious statement made by a band at the height of their powers and (shortly thereafter) popularity. Its title track may have been initially overshadowed by *Rime Of The Ancient Mariner*'s colossal girth, but *Powerslave* is the album's true high point: epic, atmospheric, dramatic and heavier than an iron pyramid, it deftly nailed the ancient Egyptian vibes presented by Derek Riggs' incredible artwork (*"Into the abyss I'll fall, the Eye of Horus!"*) while introducing a newly refined sense of dynamics and, dare we say it, subtlety into Iron Maiden's sound. According to Steve Harris, the song was assembled from several distinct ideas that Bruce Dickinson had been working on, and the end result is not just one of Bruce's greatest ever songs, but one of Maiden's most iconic anthems. As for Dave Murray's mellifluous mid-song solo? Heavy metal has never been more joyously spinetingling.

STEVE SAYS: "Again, it's a great song. *Powerslave* has become one of the great epics in the set over the years, and quite rightly so. Bruce was pleased as punch when he came up with that. It was three different ideas he had and I suggested he made one fantastic song instead of three different ones. It's a very powerful song. When you think about it, we've got loads of epics now. That's great. *Powerslave* is definitely up there with the best of them."

15. THESE COLOURS DON'T RUN
(A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH, 2006)

Whether it's the triumphant call to arms of the track itself or the fact its title references the infamous Maiden vs Sharon Osbourne Ozzfest episode, there's something that resonates deeply about this cut from the ace *A Matter Of Life And Death* album.

BAND PICK!

14. WRATHCHILD
(KILLERS, 1981)

"It's like a picking a favourite child, but the first one that springs to mind is *Wrathchild*. The lyrics, the riffs, the drums… everything about that song. I think it speaks to all metal fans. If you don't like *Wrathchild*, you're not an Iron Maiden fan! The first record I ever bought was *Killers*. When I got that record, that song just spoke to me and it still does."
JOEY JORDISON, VIMIC

13. THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST
(THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST, 1982)

"It's got to be *The Number Of The Beast*, for sure. We were on at the same time as them at Graspop in Belgium, so we had a pretty small crowd. We went over to watch them afterwards, and when they played *The Number Of The Beast* it was awesome!"
AHREN STRINGER, THE AMITY AFFLICTION

BAND PICK!

12. THE RED AND THE BLACK
(THE BOOK OF SOULS, 2015)

Were it not for *Empire Of The Clouds* hogging all the attention due to its maddening length and curious concept, *The Book Of Souls* would surely have been defined by this absolute stunner. A 13+ minute, emotionally driven voyage with some stunning three-pronged guitar work, this isn't just one of Maiden's modern triumphs, but an un-fuck-withable classic.

BAND PICK!

11. WASTED YEARS
(SOMEWHERE IN TIME, 1986)

"I love the guitar line in the beginning. It's just super-triumphant, man. One of those songs where you can see people on horses galloping into the night, but it isn't corny. How can you have this song that sounds like these guys riding into the homes of the natives and not make it sound corny? It's so gratifying."
BEN WEINMAN, THE DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN

BAND PICK!

10. 2 MINUTES TO MIDNIGHT
(POWERSLAVE, 1984)

"It combines the very best of Maiden. There's metal fury, technicality… it's a big metal banger! It became this huge MTV hit despite never going anywhere near a major key, and it has one of the best ever Maiden riffs and choruses."
TOM MORELLO, PROPHETS OF RAGE

HAMMER PICK!

9. BLOOD BROTHERS
(BRAVE NEW WORLD, 2000)

"As good as metal gets – an epic, swaying, emotionally charged masterpiece from an album that can go toe-to-toe with any of Maiden's 80s classics. It proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that Maiden were back in business on a major level, and still stands as one of their all-time-best tracks."
MERLIN ALDERSLADE, EDITOR

BAND PICK!

8. RUNNING FREE
(IRON MAIDEN, 1980)

"I remember watching the *Live At Donington* version as a kid. Bruce really revs up the crowd and they added cool new bits into the song. It's just got so much energy. It's such a gutsy track."
JOEL O'KEEFFE, AIRBOURNE

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FAN PICK!

7. FEAR OF THE DARK

(FEAR OF THE DARK, 1992)

"It encapsulates everything about the band – the catchy riffs that the crowd can sing along to, the energy that the band puts in… It's gripping for nearly seven and a half minutes and the best live song in music!"

STUART ROSE

BAND PICK!

6. THE EVIL THAT MEN DO

(SEVENTH SON OF A SEVENTH SON, 1988)

"We've covered this one, and we had a really good time working through that song and trying to make it our own. And it's collectively our favourite Iron Maiden song. The chorus is really high and the lyrics are ridiculous… although I guess you could say that about any Maiden song! But what's not to like?!"

WILL GOULD, CREEPER

FAN PICK!

5. ACES HIGH

(POWERSLAVE, 1984)

"I have been a fan of this band since 1990, ever since they came to play my hometown of Warsaw, Poland, and it only recently struck me how great the onomatopoeic sounds created by the guitarists were. You can virtually hear the engines roar and the guns firing!"

MARCIN ZDYBICKI

4. IRON MAIDEN

(IRON MAIDEN, 1980)

While there have been a couple of better songs produced in Maiden's time together (more on that in a second), this is surely still the anthem that defines them. Perfectly melding the sparky punk attack that is spread across their first album with a heavy metal weight and sense of melody that would hint at things to come, there's a reason *Iron Maiden* remains the one track to never get dropped from their sets. After all, what would Eddie do without it?

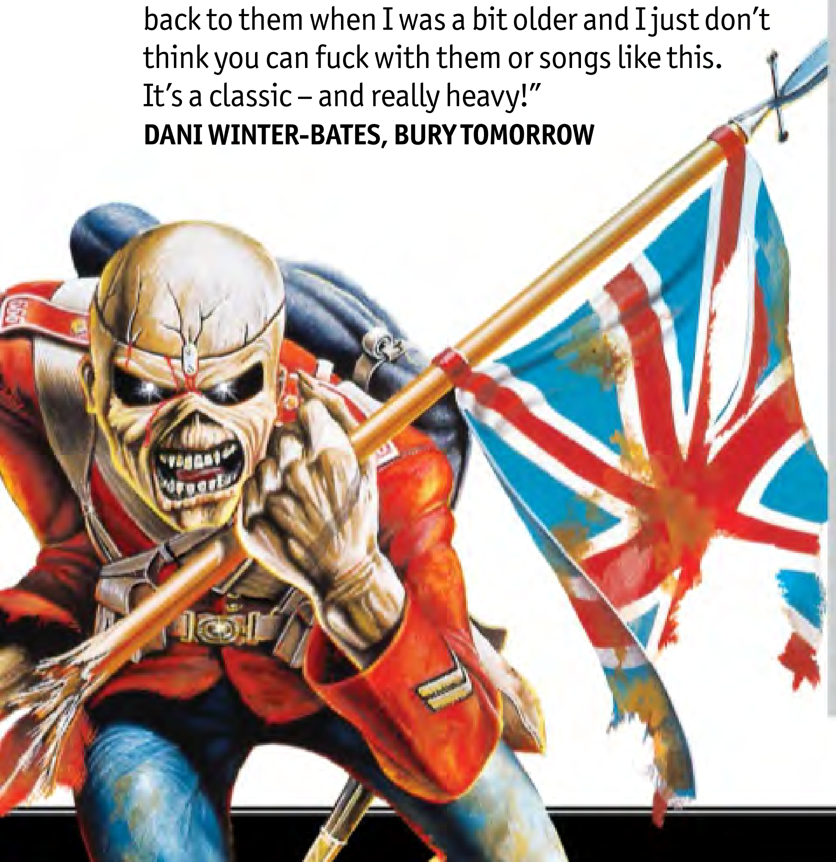
BAND PICK!

3. THE TROOPER

(PIECE OF MIND, 1983)

"It's got to be The *Trooper. That riff.* I was never a massive Maiden fan when I was a kid – I was much more into heavier bands like Pantera – but I went back to them when I was a bit older and I just don't think you can fuck with them or songs like this. It's a classic – and really heavy!"

DANI WINTER-BATES, BURY TOMORROW



Adrian Smith, Steve Harris, Dave Murray and Janick Gers on Maiden's frontline

GETTY

2. PASCHENDALE

(DANCE OF DEATH, 2003)

War has always been a major thematic inspiration in metal, both as a metaphor for life's struggles and to acknowledge the heroism of those who fought to preserve our freedoms. Maiden's knack for vivid storytelling has never seemed more potent than when wrapped around a genuine historical event, and with that in mind, no Maiden songs exerts more emotional clout or unnerving intensity than *Paschendale*.

The Battle Of Passchendaele (its correct Belgian spelling) took place in Belgium during WWI between July and November 1917. Allied forces were seeking to wrestle control of the city of Ypres from the German Empire and to block the German army's supply lines. More than 400,000 British and German soldiers were slaughtered in one of the war's most senseless and gruesome campaigns. Once again, Maiden have long exhibited a knack for summing up the brutality of conflict and Adrian Smith's initial idea, to write a song about this most hideous of war stories, could hardly have been more fitting. What is truly extraordinary about the resulting song is how elegantly the guitarist's monumental musical ideas meshed seamlessly with the bitter, bruised poetry of the lyrics, meticulously evoking the horror and futility of what took place on that battlefield:

'In the smoke, in the mud and lead/Smell the fear and the feeling of dread/Soon be time to go over the wall/Rapid fire and the end of us all…'

Iron Maiden's musical progress in the 21st century has very much been about the expanding and harnessing of more overtly progressive ideals, resulting in longer songs, more elaborate arrangements and ever more absorbing lyrical conceits. When *Dance Of Death* hit the shops in September 2003, *Paschendale* seemed to represent the zenith of that approach. Structurally inspired, it's a masterclass in goosebump-inducing dynamics, as it lurches from restrained, unsettling quiet to eruptions of power and volume, all driven along by Nicko McBrain's thrillingly expressive drumming. An instant show-stopper when Maiden hit the road to promote that new album, *Paschendale* also gave Bruce an opportunity to throw himself bodily into conveying the true drama inherent in the song's meaning and delivery. As Bruce sang, the band's stage set seemed to morph into a hazy, bloodsoaked battlefield and, by no means for the first time, Iron Maiden's legendarily spectacular live show seemed to transform into something beyond simple entertainment. Nostalgia may dictate that earlier Maiden songs are more regularly celebrated, but *Paschendale* stands as one of the band's greatest ever creations.

STEVE SAYS: "Adrian came up with the idea for that one. I helped arrange and write and take it where I felt it needed to go. But yeah, it's just a big, epic song. It was a very enjoyable song to play, but you had to concentrate! I was really happy with the way it came out. I'd like to play it again, for sure."

1. HALLOWED BE THY NAME

(NUMBER OF THE BEAST, 1982)

'I'm waiting in my cold cell/When the bell begins to chime...'

If writing immortal heavy metal anthems was easy, everyone would be doing it.

Iron Maiden mastered the art of writing songs that every fan wants to scream along with early in their career, with instant crowd-pleasers like *Running Free* and *Wrathchild* swiftly entering the established metal canon.

But it wasn't until the band's third album, their first with Bruce Dickinson and a record that would turn them into superstars, that the finishing touches were put to Steve Harris's blueprint for *the* Maiden sound. *The Number Of The Beast* was full of definitive moments, from *Run To The Hills*' chart-busting fury to *Children Of The Damned*'s dark melodrama, but it was the final track on the album that had the greatest and most enduring impact.

Superficially, *Hallowed Be Thy Name* is a song about a man facing execution and his thoughts as he awaits "the gallows pole". An early example of the existential uncertainty that Steve Harris has since expressed regularly through his lyrics, the song is plainly a lot deeper in theme and thought than it first appears.

The doomed man's terror of the unknown, his regrets, his despair and, as the song draws to a close, some degree of acceptance and surrender to the void… well, let's just say that *Hallowed Be Thy Name* is no *Party Hard*. In some ways it was an unexpectedly profound statement from a band that had certainly touched upon big ideas before, but never with the precision and poetry that Steve conjured for *The Number Of The Beast*'s explosive denouement.

While *Hallowed*'s lyrics are certainlypowerful and memorable, they would not have had the same effect on the Maiden faithful and the wider metal world beyond had the music underpinning them not been up to scratch. Luckily for everyone, Steve's singular vision enabled him to attain his creative goal of bringing thunderous, melodic heavy rock and adventurous, progressive song structures together. From its ominous, restrained intro, with its tolling bells and Dave Murray's classical guitar, to the numerous gloriously fluid twists and turns, all drenched in Dave and Adrian Smith's blissful harmonies, *Hallowed Be Thy Name* is an immaculate mini-symphony. Like all great stories, it has a beginning, a middle and an end, but like all great anthems, it has several unforgettable hooks, too.

Beyond bringing their breakthrough album to a stunning close, *Hallowed Be Thy Name* has also been an incredibly important live song for Maiden over the decades. Traditionally a set closer, it was almost obligatory at the band's gigs from its first performance in 1982 until the conclusion of the Final Frontier tour at the O2 Arena in London in August 2011. Many fans were distraught when the song disappeared from subsequent setlists – although, it has to be said, Maiden have more than enough great songs to distract us with – and it's no exaggeration to say that joy was unconfined when *Hallowed*… was reintroduced for the Book Of Souls tour.

The song, and Bruce Dickinson's high-energy demands for crowd participation during it, have become such a part of the Maiden live experience over the years that it must now be pretty much inconceivable that they will ever drop it from their sets again. Or, at least, we hope that's the case.

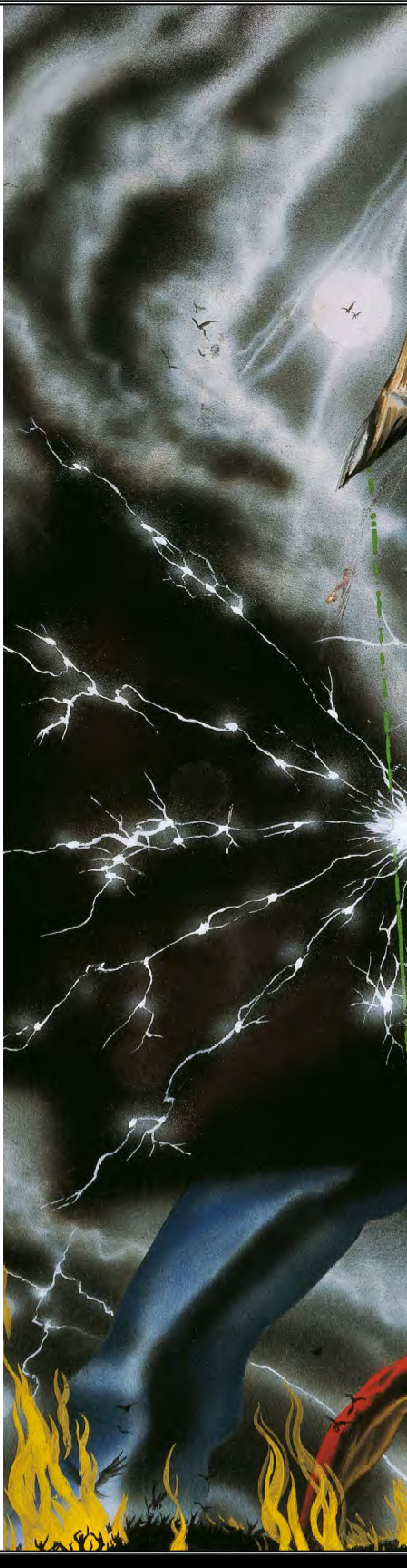
Considering its length and its complexity, *Hallowed Be Thy Name* has defied the odds to become one of *the* greatest metal anthems of all time. It has been covered on countless occasions, most notably by Machine Head, Cradle Of Filth, Iced Earth and Dream Theater (the latter having performed *The Number Of The Beast* live in its entirety in 2002), but it is also one of very few songs that have transcended mere popularity and passed into the emotional fabric of the world of heavy music.

No wonder that Steve Harris himself cites the song as his favourite Maiden song of all. *Hallowed Be Thy Name* sits at the top of this list because it's not just Iron Maiden's greatest ever song – it might just be the greatest heavy metal song of all time.

STEVE SAYS: "If someone who'd never heard Maiden before – someone from another planet or something – asked you about Maiden, what would you play them? I think *Hallowed*… is the one. It's always nice to rest songs if you've been playing them forever, because when you bring them back it's exciting again. It's always enjoyable to play that one."

"I'D PLAY *HALLOWED*… TO SOMEONE WHO'D NEVER HEARD MAIDEN"

IT'S THEIR DEFINITIVE MOMENT, SAYS STEVE HARRIS



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